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THE

QUORNDON HOUNDS:

OR,

A Virginian at Melton Mowbray.

BY FRANK FORESTER.

AUTHOR OF "MY SHOOTING-BOX," "THE DEER-STALKERS," "THE WARWICK WOODLANDS," ETC., ETC.

WITH ORIGINAL ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR.

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To George R. Graham, Esq.

My Dear Graham,

Allow me to dedicate to you, the following little work, of which the previous part appeared in the pages of your magazine. I do not say your *capital* magazine, because for any one to praise a man to his face is never in the best of taste, and to praise himself is always in the worst, and I hope I am so much identified with you as one of your eldest, if not the eldest, inhabitants, and your most constant collaborator, that we are rather *arcades ambo*, than *unus et alter*.

Ever your friend and servant,

HENRY WM. HERBERT.

Advertisement.

The aim and object of this little volume is to lay before my sporting friends and the public in general, to whom I have so often discoursed—and with so kindly hearers—concerning the Field Sports of America, a slight sketch of English Fox-hunting—the sport of sports, *par excellence*, and that sport carried to its *acme* as it is no where but with the Quorndon hounds and at Melton Mowbray.

The use of real names and characters will be excused, because nothing other than to the credit of those specially named is herein contained—the identity of those unpleasantly depicted is veiled under misnomers.

For the rest the merit of the sketch, if it have any, lies in its perfect truthfulness. Men, horses, dogs, and scenery are as they were at Melton when I was there last, three and twenty years ago.

HENRY WM. HERBERT.

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THE QUORNDON HOUNDS.

CHAPTER I.

A CLUB-ROOM.

WHO does not know what Melton Mowbray was? Not Melton Mowbray of these degenerate days, but the Melton Mowbray, when the SQUIRE used to *squeal*, Goodrick and Holyoke and Forester—not *Frank*, by the way, but my lord—and Alvanley and Campbell of Saddell, and Valentine Magher—the bruisingest of bruising riders—and Musgrave of the north, Peyton and Gardner, and ill-natured and good-natured Jem M'Donald, and fifty others, we could write of an' we would, to *ride*—ay! to *squeal* and to *ride* to the *ladies**—to Osbaldistone's lady-pack. Nothing ever ran on earth like those fleet, glossy, graceful darlings; nothing ever will run like them on earth again; for like *larking ladies*, as they were, they almost invariably *ran away!*

It was in Melton Mowbray, then, in the good days when George the Fourth was king—before the world had heard tell of any of the *ists* or *isms*—when men feared their God, honored their king, went to church

* It was the practice of that consummate sportsman and great huntsman to work, feed, and lodge his dog-pack and bitch-pack separately, instead of using the two sexes promiscuously. The *ladies* were the love and delight of all true sportsmen; and in Northamptonshire and Liecestershire their fame will live till doomsday.

o' Sundays, and drank their port at dinner, without once dreaming that they were behind the age, much less that they were robbers, insomuch as they owned goodly acres; or habitual drunkards, insomuch as they preferred Bordeaux to milk and water, and old October to the then unsung and unhonored Croton.

It was in Melton Mowbray, then, on a dark, drizzling Saturday night, in the latter end of November, 1830, that we will take a peep into the interior of the Melton Club-room.

There; it is, as you see, a large, substantially furnished, well-lighted room; prepared with especial reference to comfort, but very little heed to show. The carpets are of the softest, the arm-chairs of the easiest, the grates are replenished with piles of Cannel coal, blazing as if they would outvie the hundreds of wax candles; the arm-chairs are filled, the sofas occupied, the tables surrounded by the first men in England; the first in birth and breeding, as in bearing and appearance—many the first in talent, as in rank; some with hard-earned and world-wide reputation; and yet, in the means and appliances for their comfort, there is none of that ostentatious display of glass and gilding, of satin and velvet, of *buhl* and *marquetry*, which is to be seen with us in the town-house of every fifth-rate merchant prince, who is to-day a millionaire, to-morrow a bankrupt and a beggar; nay! even in the saloon of every transient steamboat that plies, laden with emigrants and traders, trappers, and miners, backwoodsmen and blacklegs, over the glittering waters of our great western lakes.

A few fine pictures on the walls, by Lawrence or Sir Joshua, by Stubbs and Cooper and Landseer, portraits these of distinguished Nimrods of their day, masters of packs, or followers of the Quorn, those of their favorite companions and allies, the horses that

lived to the end of the longest run, the hounds that ran the fleetest and the truest; but no mirrors of plate-glass, wherein Goliah might have viewed himself entire, horsed on a charger up to his colossal frame; no cornices of carven gold; no tables of invaluable porphyry, or consoles of Russian malachite.

Two or three whist-tables are distinguished easily enough, by the gravity and silence of their occupants; two or three more, merrier and more noisily surrounded, where ecarté is in full blast—at one of the first, that down-looking, light-haired, uneyebrowed man, with a voice clear and soft as a silver-trumpet, a voice whose pleadings, it is said, no woman ever heard and resisted—you would pass him in a crowd utterly unnoticed, yet he has broken more hearts and ruined more reputations than any man in England—that is Henry de R***, untainted as yet by the infamy which in after days tarnished the ermine of his baronial robes, and known only as the best and luckiest whist-player, the man most *a bonnes fortunes* of all in, or out of London.

Opposite him, that handsome, large-built man, with the aquiline nose and well-opened eye, the most aristocratic air and bearing, yet the openest and most kindly manner, that is the Duke of Beaufort, the dashing Worcester of past days, never to be forgotten as the best-natured of the dandies. Two Georges fill the party *quarre*, the handsome and elaborately got up Anson, with his finely chiseled but somewhat unmeaning features; and his small, natty, well-dressed *vis-a-vis*, the prince of sportsmen and goodfellows, the deepest of betters, and most unmoved of losers, then something new upon the turf, George Payne of Selby. That slovenly, nay, almost dirty, person who has just backed De R*** so heavily against Tom Gascoigne, is the well known baronet Sir William Ingilby, so well known for his naive replics, in after days, on the

De R*** investigation, whereby he avowed that when a friend, who had detected the unhappy baron in the act of cheating, asked his advice as to what should be done, he advised him "always to be his partner, or to back him."

Perhaps, already he suspects him; at all events he backs him; and lo! he has won, for Tom is shelling out the bank notes to a heavy figure.

About that other table, larking and laughing merrily over their pool at ecarté, are a younger party, Jardinier and the M'Donalds, Dick Gascoigne, and Mount Sandford, Foljambe, and Charley Sutton, all except the first named merry, and more elated with their fun than minding the game, or caring about the winnings; but Jardinier's brow is bent, and his expression dark and sullen; his mind is on his winnings, and he plays, as he rides, boldly and very well, but with a cold, ill-natured, sulky resolution, as unlike as possible to the fierce, rash, furious style which marks his rival, equally in daring horsemanship and desperate bad temper—the most unpopular man in England, then ill-known as Bellamy, now worse known as Garrondale.

There again, at another whist-table, with his hat pulled down over his dogged, saturnine features, and his dark claret-colored cut-away—that is the clever, wayward, cross, and fitful John George Lambton, not yet Lord Durham; and opposite to him, with small pinched face, that you scarcely know whether to call plain or handsome, and an air most fastidious, if you should not rather call it contemptuous, sits most eccentric of all talents, most talented of all eccentrics, Tom Duncombe.

The very fat man, Lambton's partner, is the bon vivant, the wit, the welter weight, the friend, under an older dynasty of fashion, of Brummel and the prince, and still the cream of the cream of the London

world, and the slashingest heavy weight in all Leicestershire, that is Lord Alvanley; he who proposed to amend the constitution of the natural and civil year, by having all the frost and snow of the former, all the Sundays of the latter, gathered into the months of April, May, June and July, so that neither weather nor worship should interfere with the sportsman's occupation, from the first of shooting on the moors in August until the last of fox-hunting in March.

He with a chin almost as long as that of Titus Oates, of ill memory, making his mouth appear to be in the centre of his face, that is Molyneux, except his father Sefton, the best finger on four horses in the kingdom, and second to very few at a brook or a bullfinch.

Musgrave and Magher, Goodricke and Holyoke sit in close conclave with the Squire, discussing points of bone and muscle, breeding and blood, as if the nation's weal thereon depended, in low tones, of which nothing escaped to the general ear, except now and then some such phrase as "splendid arm"—"why, yes; a little cross-made, but monstrous power, and then such a stride"—or, "no—by Timoleon out of an Orville mare," or something of similar import relating to what was to those most veritable members of the *equestrian* order, the only serious subject of thought and object of life.

Others of less note, younger, yet ardent votaries of the chase, were lounging about, sipping coffee or curacoa, chatting of the news of the day, the best run of the season, which had occurred on that very Saturday; whose horse had lived to the end of it; how Osbaldistone's "Clasher" had cleared the Union Canal lock between Turlangton and Countisthorpe, twenty-five feet of bright water in his stride; how many of his ribs, or whether it was his collar-bone, Grantly Berkeley broke in that tremendous push over the park

gate below Arnesby; whose wife it was Jem Trevor had run away with; and whether Schwartzenbergh was going to marry Lady Ellenborough, or if it was true that he had got the emperor to forbid it.

Some of the old hands were beginning to talk about going home, and many of the young ones were ordering broiled bones and deviled lobsters, mulled Burgundy or iced hock, to be prepared in the dining-room, with a passing remark that it would not much matter if there should be a spice of headache the next morning, as it was Sunday and there would be nothing to do.

"Quite right," said Alvanley laughing, as he got up from his whist-table, and pocketed Lambton's sovereigns, "quite right Charley; for my own part, I find it vastly *improving*, as the Methodists call it, to have a little headache on Sunday morning; it promotes repentance so much, and I make it a practice always to repent on Sundays. I think, in fact, that the bishops ought to have it seriously recommended. I'll speak to Sydney Smith about it, when I see him next."

"About what, my lord?" said a tall, elegantly shaped, slender man, whose black coat, though it was cut in rather sporting style, proved his cloth; and who was no other than that splendid horseman, and yet more splendid whip, Algernon Peyton, Rector of Fen Drayton. "It is something new for you to meddle with church matters, since the bishops refused to concentrate the Sundays for you. What do you want the bench of incurables to recommend now?"

"Only getting drunk on Saturday nights," cried Jardinier, with a rude, coarse laugh, "in order to promote repentance on Sunday mornings; what do you think of it, most reverend?"

"I don't think it would do at all," said Cheshire, who had been standing stupidly, and half sulkily, listening without speaking, suddenly giving tongue.

"Not at all for gentlemen; the lower orders always get drunk on Saturday."

"A very sage remark, Ches.," replied Castlereagh, with a light laugh, for, though they were great allies, he never missed a chance of giving a slap to the stupid, haughty don. "On the same principle, of course, you never dine or sup on Saturday nights, for that is the night *par excellence* on which those poor devils *do* sup, if they sup at all."

"By the same rule, gentlemen must never kiss their wives on Saturday nights," said Tom Gascoigne.

"Tom, you are, out of all reckoning, behind the day," returned Castlereagh. "Gentlemen of Ches's. order never kiss their wives. Other men's wives are your only Cheshire kissing."

What remark the snob nobleman would have made to this gentle cut is unfortunately lost to the world in general, and to the readers of Graham in particular; for at this moment, the door opened, and there appeared on the threshold a very good-looking and exceedingly gentlemanly person, of small and rather slender frame, but exquisitely made both for grace and power, with dark, curling hair, dark, oriental eyes, and a slightly Asiatic cast of features, set off by a small penciled moustache and imperial.

He had a traveling cap on his head, and a dark cloth pelisse, lined throughout with the most superb sables, over a plain evening dress.

Scarcely had he shown himself before he was hailed by a perfect tumult of welcome and congratulation, proving the extreme popularity of the new comer. Popular indeed he was, none ever more so, or more deservedly so, as every one will admit, who remembers, or is so happy as to know, the Count Matuschevitz.

A finished and thorough gentleman, as all Russian gentlemen we have ever seen invariably are; a man

of profound accomplishment; of singular skill as a linguist, speaking every modern tongue with the fluency and ease of a native; a diplomatist of perfect *finesse*, though at the period of which we write his abilities in that line were undeveloped; he was, in addition to all this, as agreeable an associate, as amiable a companion, and as good a fellow as ever was sent to represent one foreign power near the court of another.

At this particular time, the diplomatic situation of the Count Matuschevitz was somewhat anomalous; for, although he was known to be connected with the embassy, at the head of which then was the magnificent Prince Lieven, his duties were singularly unburthensome, his sole occupations seeming to be killing the time by means of all those stirring and athletic exercises, games and sports which have in all ages, and under all sovereigns, been the peculiar favorites of the manly aristocracy of old England.

In after days it came out, that the avocations and duties of the gay and gallant count were identical; and that the best shot, the best rider, the best fencer, tennis-player, sparrer, in the Russian empire, he was sent by the great and shrewd ruler of that wonderful semi-barbarous power, all of whose rulers seem to be, by hereditary right and the grace of God, great and wise, and shrewd and crafty, for the express end and purpose of riding and shooting, sparring and fencing himself into the good graces of the English gentry and nobility; and so becoming the associate of their private hours, and the judge of their characters, to a degree unattainable by the envoys of any other court.

How far Nicholas succeeded in his purpose it is not within the scope of this paper to divulge; but this much is certain, that, although in the omnibus box at the opera, in the drawing-rooms, or ball-rooms of the metropolis, the French or the Italian, the Austrian or the Prussian envoys and attaches might keep pace

with clever Russian, in the recess of Parliament, when the peers shoot pheasants, and the members fox-hunt, they had no more chance with Matuschevitz, than a French *boxeur* would have had with Tom Crib; or a French *jochei* with Jim Robinson or Chiffney, in the pig-skin.

To this day and hour, no Frenchman, not even the admirable Crichton of the nineteenth century, the imitated but inimitable D'Orsay, has ever been known to get even tolerably well across a country. It is not pluck they lack, nor horsemanship—their cavalry are better riders than the English—but somehow or other it is not in them—they haven't got the *go*, still less the judgment and coolness, the head, the hand, and the seat, which must be combined to carry a man well across the country in the pig-skin upon the back of a flyer.

Multitudinous Frenchmen can pop over rabbits in a furze brake, slaughter pheasants at a battue, shoot hares from behind a rock or a bush, lying *perdu*, at a dead aim; but when we see one Frenchman, born and bred in *la belle France*, do his day's walking and day's shooting in good style on the moors—throw a fly neatly over a trout stream—or ride, as we have said, even tolerably well across a country, we shall expect the next morning to see a blackamoor washed white, and a leopard change his spots.

But this little digression, finished, we return to our muttons, and beg to assure the reader that if no Frenchman ever had the *go* in him for Leicestershire, the Russian Matuschevitz had it in perfection.

If at first the old stagers laughed in their sleeves at the somewhat dragoon seat, the tip of the toe only in the stirrup, the heel well sunk and turned outward, and the too accurately *manege* style of the whole seat and turn out, no one could deny the unmistakeable firmness of that seat at the stiffest fence or widest

brook; no one could question the quickness and lightness of the finger in a difficulty; no one could doubt the pluck—that truly English quality—with which he resumed his seat after the most weltering fall, and crammed, without flinching or craning, his half-blown beast at the next bullfinch.

In a short time, too, the one obnoxious thing, the seat and style were altered. The count was too thorough a horseman not to perceive and adopt at once the superiority of the English jockey seat over the dragoon—or continental—style, whether in a race over the flats or in getting across a country.

Before his first season was complete, his bent knee, home foot in the stirrup, and low bridle-hand were as correct, as his pluck and daring had from the first been undeniable. The count *had* ridden, booted and spurred, in jockey-tops and white leathers, into the most intimate affections of the sporting aristocracy of England.

Loud, therefore, was the burst of affectionate greeting, from young and old, dandy or country gentleman, that greeted Matuschevitz as he made his entree into the club-room, expected indeed, but greeted as if unexpected, and at once the observed of all observers.

"So you have come at last, count. We had almost given you up, but better late than never," exclaimed one.

"Deuced well mounted though, now that you have come," cried another.

"Yes, indeed, they came in ten days ago," said Jem McDonald; "Alick and I went down to look at them last Sunday. Your fellow, Martindale, is getting famously forward with them."

"You're too late, Matuschevitz, for the best thing we're like to have this season. One day too late," said Valentine Magher. "Only this morning. From the gorse above Turlangton, into the vale, across the

canal-lock toward Arnesby village, through the park, and ran into him in a grass field on the hill over Countisthorpe, twelve miles and a half as the crow flies, without a single check, in an hour and ten minutes."

"The cream of every thing in the shape of fox-hunting," said Sir James Musgrave.

"The worse luck mine," said the count laughing, as he at length got an opportunity of getting in a word, after undergoing the extremity of hand-shaking, divesting himself of his sable cloak, and ensconcing himself in an arm-chair by the fire. "But we must try to make up for it yet. What are you going to do for us to-morrow, squire?" he continued, speaking perfectly good English, without the slightest foreign accent. "No, not to-morrow, for that, as the lawyers say, is *dies non*, but on Monday."

"Something good if we've any luck," squeaked Osbaldiston. "Wymondham village is our meet, and if we find a good fox we may take you across the Whitsendine, and down into the vale, count."

"That gray will be the thing for Monday, Matuschevitz," said Harry Goodrick, the best judge of a weight-carrier in the country, unless it were Magher.

"He is a magnificent brute, such power and such breeding, too; he would carry my sixteen stone just as easily as your twelve. Take my advice and ride him on Monday; the vale will be devilish heavy after these rains, and the brooks are all bankfull."

"No, Sir Harry, Martindale's commands are the brown mare, and the dark-chestnut, for the second horse; and, you know, Martindale brooks no question of supremacy in his department."

"Oh! Martindale be hanged; ride the gray; he is out and out the best of the lot; though the lot is a prime one."

"Sorry you think so, for the gray is—"

"Is what?" asked half a dozen eager voices. "There is nothing wrong about him, I'll be sworn."

"Is—not mine."

"None of them are, for that matter, I fancy," said the laird of Saddell; "I suppose Tilbury horses you as usual; and he has done wonders for you this year. By the bye, what a lot of them you've got; I counted fifty-six as they came in, beside hacks."

"He is not Tilbury's either. There were two lots together: only thirty of them are mine. I wish he *was* mine, but I can't get him, though I bid five hundred for him at sight, without trial."

"Why, whose the devil is he then? He looks too high bred for a provincial?"

"Are we to have a new snob, count, this season?" asked ill-natured Jardinier, with a coarse oath; he was expelled from Eton for foul language. "We've had no one to roast, this year and more."

"The gray belongs to Mr. Fairfax," answered the Russian quietly, "and from all that I have heard, I don't think he will do very well for roasting, Lord Jardinier."

"No, indeed, will he not," said Dick Gascoigne, "Tom is the best man in Yorkshire, and neither Jardinier nor any one else will ride much before him. But I had no notion Tom was coming here. I heard from him ten days ago, and he said nothing about leaving Yorkshire."

"I don't believe, Gascoigne, he ever was in Yorkshire in all his life," answered Matuschevitz with a smile.

"What, not Tom Fairfax of Newton Kyne?"

"Certainly *not* Tom Fairfax of Newton Kyne, but Percy Fairfax of Accomac."

"Of Acc—what?"

"Who the deuce is Percy Fairfax?"

"Where the devil is Accomac?"

"Is that place with an unpronounceable name in Siberia, count?"

"By no means, it is in Virginia."

"Where's that?" asked Cheshire, whose hereditary senatorship had not carried with it any geographical lore, either hereditary or acquired.

"Oh! don't you know that?" cried Vauxhall scornfully. "I thought every one knew that—it's a place somewhere in Italy; I know I used to read about it in the Roman history."

"Exactly, Vaux," said Tom Gascoigne, laughing, as was every one in the room at this strange jumble, "The capital of Volscia, the grand-duke of it is Coriolanus—or—no, he died the other day, I think; did he not, Matuschevitz? You Russians are always marvelously posted up in history one way or other."

"To answer all your questions at once; for, not being absolutely posted up to the extent for which you give me credit, I made some inquiries about Colonel Fairfax, whom I met a fortnight or three weeks ago at the Travelers—to answer all your questions at once, Accomac is a county in Virginia; this Virginia is not, Lord Vauxhall, a place in Italy, but one of the United States of North America; and Colonel Percy Fairfax is now Secretary of Legation near the Court of St. James. He has been for some time with Mr. Rush at Paris, and has just been appointed to London."

"The devil! a live Yankee!"

"How the deuce came he by two such names as Percy and Fairfax?" asked Cheshire, who *had* read the peerage as well as the turf register. "The fellow must be an impostor."

"I rather think not," interposed Lambton, proving then that he did know something about American history, as he proved afterward, as Earl of Durham, that he knew nothing about Canadian politics. "I rather think you will find, Cheshire," he continued, with a

sweet sneer on his cynical yet half handsome features, "that, about the time when a noble ancestor of yours was dancing and making *bon-mots* with De Grammont and the other wits and bloods—as it was then the fashion of the day to call them—of King Charles the Second's court, the near descendants, who have now both become, by chance of blood, the right heirs male of the Earls Percy and the Barons Fairfax, emigrated to Virginia and founded families. I suppose this gentleman belongs to that lineage, count."

"Precisely so. Fairfax on the father's side, Percy on the mother's."

"I thought as much when I heard you speak of him. And what sort of person is he?"

"Very much *comme il faut;* handsome enough, and good manners; *tant soit peu* French, rather than English, in his manner; and perhaps a little too finished in his English; yet on the whole very well—a fine young man I should call him, and I fancy, a good fellow."

"What do you mean by too finished in his English, count?" asked Jardinier, who was no great dab at speaking, and no hand at all at spelling, the vernacular—"that must be very funny."

"Oh! I don't know exactly; he uses too long words perhaps; he says 'extraordinary' when we should say 'odd,' and 'lovely' where we would say 'pretty;' and he calls the 'blacks' 'our colored population.' But it only sounds quaint; no one would call it vulgar or affected, and on the whole, Jardinier, I would not advise you to try to roast him."

"By ——!" exclaimed the peer, with an oath, "I shan't try it. I have not the least taste for blunderbusses in a saw-pit."

"He would hardly need those," said the Russian, "though he looks likely enough to use them on occasion. He did shoot a couple of French fellows, I be-

lieve, in some barbarous barrier duel which they forced on him, before his breakfast. But he can shoot well enough with pistols, in all conscience. I saw him beat Horatio Ross, the other day, at twenty paces; and, after that, shoot a tie with D'Orsay."

"What keeps D'Orsay in town?" asked Cheshire.

"Fear of his tailor, I believe," said Matuschevitz. "But they say that Wiltshire and Pembroke are going to pay his debts, so you may look for him soon."

"But tell us some more about the Yankee? Is he quarrelsome that you put Jardinier on his guard against him?"

"Not in the least, so far as I have ever seen; but then, you know, Jardinier sometimes is a little. Nor did I put him on his guard against Colonel Fairfax. only against roasting him. I like Fairfax very much, as you will judge when I tell you he came with me from London in my britcka, and we have taken house and stables together for the season."

"Indeed! Then you know him very well?"

"As well as one knows a man he has known three weeks."

"Rich?" asked stingy Jardinier.

"*Par dieu!* I never asked him."

"No; but you might have guessed."

"I left that for him to do."

"Good heaven! You don't mean to say that he '*guesses*,' and drawls, and talks through his nose, like Matthews in Jonathan W. Doubikins. I shall die of laughing if he does, though I were sure to be shot for it the next minute," said Tom Duncombe.

"No. I was only joking of course. He speaks as well as you do."

"Devilish inquisitive, of course," said Jardinier once again, nothing abashed as yet—for to say the

simple truth, it does take a good deal to abash him.

"He never asked me if you were rich, Lord Jardinier," Matuschevitz answered, quietly and drily; for he disliked that worthy about as much as his good-nature and careless temper allowed him to dislike any body.

"There now, for heaven's sake, Jardinier, don't ask any more questions to-night," cried Tom Gascoigne, laughing enough to split his sides, "I should think you'd got enough to satisfy a dozen Yankees."

"I shall ask as many more questions as I please, and I don't see that I've *got* any thing, as you call it."

"Oh! don't you?" said Tom quietly, "pray ask more then; I dare say the count will answer you, and it's very droll."

"That will be as I please," grumbled the other doggedly, and walked off into the dining room, where he called for a glass of brandy and water, drank it by himself, and stalked away, as it seemed to the regret of nobody.

"Well," said the riding Russian, breaking the silence that ensued on his lordship's departure, "you are a very hospitable set of fellows, certainly; for here I have been an hour and a half, talking myself hoarse, and hungry as a man who has not eaten a mouthful but one tough mutton-chop at the 'Cock at Eaton,' since breakfast, and not one of you have offered me a glass of wine, or a mouthful of supper."

"It's your own fault, count, for amusing us with such inventions about nobly-born and highly-bred Yankee secretaries. I believe they are all sheer imagination. But come along, we ordered some deviled lobsters, and broiled bones, and Grey announced the arrival this afternoon of some real Colchesters.

There is a batch of capital Chablis in ice, and some of Metternich's own Johannisberger, which Sefton sent down the other day to Alvanley. Come along, if you'll tell us the truth about this Virginian phœnix, we'll feed you to your heart's desire."

"Not a word till I have eaten, and more especially drank. My tongue cleaves to my jaws."

And thereupon they adjourned to the dining-room, and for a short time nothing was heard but the clucking of corks drawn from the long necks, and the clash of knives, till the ardor of eating was repressed on all sides; and then, once more, Matuschevitz was besieged by inquiries anent this new arriver at the head-quarters and capital of fox-hunting, by general consent of the world civilized or savage.

"Upon my word, I can tell you very little more about him than I have told already. He brought me letters from Charles de Mornay, and from our embassy, the Duchess de Dino and the Vaudreuils knew him in Paris, and Lord Stuart de Rothesay recommended him to Sefton and Hertford; so that of course, he is *comme il faut*. I think he has got letters for you too, duke," he added, turning to Beaufort. "I really think he will be an acquisition to our society. He is young and fresh, without being in the least raw; enjoys every thing without being boisterous, and is fastidious enough without being *blaze*. I am sure he is good humored, for I saw him lose eight thousand the other night to Dick Mildmay at *ecarte*, without seeming to care whether he won or lost."

"Are you in earnest?"

"Upon my honor! He gave his check for it on Coutts; and as Dick had not seen such a sight for many a day, he took a cab at ten o'clock, and they paid it without looking at it."

"Ah!" said Duncombe, "that comes of 'the colored

population,' count. A tobacco estate or a sugar plantation is your true El Dorado now-a-days."

"Can he ride?" asked Magher.

"He sits his hack well enough, and has got a nice light hand. He talks modestly enough about it though, and speaks of the wild Virginia bush-hunting as a poor school for Leicestershire. But, on the whole, I think he will go. He is a capital judge of horse-flesh, and does not stand for prices. He is better mounted than I am, and you know I give what I am asked."

"Yes! yes! Are you horsed by Tilbury this year, or do you ride your own?"

"A little of both. I have twelve of my own and eighteen of his. Mine are the best, though; yet not quite so good as Fairfax's."

"We must call upon him, I suppose," said several voices.

"Certainly. Certainly. By what Matuschevitz says he must be a trump."

"Suppose you and he excuse a short notice, and dine with me to-morrow," said Cheshire, on whom the loss and prompt payment of the eight thousand had made some impression. "I have a few friends of yours, only half a dozen or so; George Anson, Beaufort, Duncombe, Alick McDonald, Forester, and Alvanley. Lady Cheshire sees some people in the evening, and it may amuse your friend as it is Sunday and a blank evening. Mention it to him, and I will call upon him in the morning and do the formal. What say you?"

"Oh, for myself, that I shall be charmed. For Fairfax, of course I can't answer; but I am sure he has no engagement, and I have no doubt he will be delighted to make his debut under the auspices of such *beaux yeux*, as will shine upon him at your table."

"I consider it an *affair finished*, as the French say," answered Cheshire. "And in the meantime, I shall say good-night, for it has grown late while we have been talking about your great Virginian."

"By the bye! they used to call somebody *that*, didn't they?" asked Vauxhall. "Who was it?"

"*One* General Washington," replied Lambton, coolly.

"Oh, yes! so it was; that'll do to talk to him about."

"Admirably. But don't say any thing about Ross to him."

"Why not? Who was Ross?"

"Why he *took* Washington."

"The devil he did. Well, you're a good fellow, after all, to tell me; for, just as likely as not I should have said something; and, if he is such a shot, it would be a bore to be killed for a blunder."

"Much worse to be laughed at, hey, Vaux?"

"I believe you."

"Why yes, as to that, you're like the eels."

"What eels?"

"Used to it, you know. Ha! ha! Well, good-night."

"Good-night, every body."

So they parted.

CHAPTER II.

A VIRGINIAN.

Breakfast was over in the snug hunting-quarters of Count Matuschevitz and his Virginian friend, although the materials had not yet been removed; and the remnants of the cold grouse pie, the *rognons au vin de madere*, the *omelette aux huitres*, the chocolate pot, and the two empty long-necks, redolent still of the bouquet of chateau margaux, still spoke volumes for the nature of the feed which had been set before the representatives of the two most opposite powers, the greatest despotism and the only republic of the modern world. It was a calm, soft, genial morning, such as is rarely seen in England during the dull and depressing month of December—the month *par excellence* of mist and melancholy, suicide and snow-squalls —with a sun shining warmly through the fleecy vapors which partially veiled his lustre; and a breath of south-westerly wind, that fanned the brow and regaled the senses, like the first sigh of spring-time. So grateful, indeed, was the weather, and so agreeable this lingering of a gentler season into the very lap of winter, that one of the windows of the breakfast-room was left open, and that the friends sat on the broad, soft cushions, with which the window-seat was spread, gazing out into the unpaved yellow road, along which the mingled groups of peasantry and gentry were returning from the little village church, morning service just ended.

The Russian minister has been introduced already; his comrade, Colonel Fairfax, was a much taller and

more manly-looking person; indeed, he was considerably above the average height of men, and was built in proportion, with broad shoulders, a deep, round chest, thin flanks, and limbs of singular symmetry and grace.

His face was rather expressive than handsome, although the features were well-cut, regular, and shapely; and it would not have been easy, even for a practical physiognomist, to say whether the expression was pleasing or the reverse.

The brow was broad and well developed, and the dark brown hair, which clustered over it in rich, loose waves, was silky and luxuriant; but there was something like an habitual frown, of gloom or discontent, it would seem, rather than of temper, which kept the face continually ruffled. His eyes were well opened, dark and lustrous, but there was at times a quick and fiery light in those clear orbs, that told a strange tale to the wary observer, of fierce dormant passions, kept at rest only by a resolute and energetic will. There were some lines, too, from the angles of the nostril downward, though these were partially concealed by a long upturned hussar moustache, which it was clear to see could easily degenerate into a sneer. The lips were thin, and in their ordinary state, compressed so firmly as to indicate a character of indomitable force and firmness; a character which was in no sort belied by the bold and square-cut outlines of the chin, partially shaded as it was by a long, soft imperial *a l' Henri Quatre*. His complexion was singularly dark for an European, or one of European descent, but perfectly clear and free from swarthiness, or the imputation of arising from any admixture of blood.

On the whole, while his features were at rest, though no one could have failed to pronounce him a good-looking, perhaps even a handsome man, no one would have thought of calling him attractive or pleasing;

that he possessed intellect in an unusual degree would hardly be doubted, but the perusal of his features suggested more than a doubt as to whether that intellect were not hard, and keen, and dry, as well as subtle and pervading, whether it would not in all probability lean rather to the stern realities of necessity and nature, than to "the soft side of the heart" in "which the affections are." Certainly he was not the man to whom an innocent child would come up spontaneously to seek acquaintance; or on whose knee a dog would be likely to lay its head, craving a caress, uninvited. Still, when he smiled, the whole of the dark, gloomy face lighted up, as if by magic, for that smile was no less benignant than it was ineffably bright, imaginative and cheery.

In short, grave and animated, he was two different beings. In his fits of gloom and abstraction you might have taken him for the gloomy and jealous Lucifer of Paradise Lost. Animated and joyous, you might have deemed him a seraph of love and mercy.

At the moment of our glancing at him for the first time, however, there was nothing especially seraphic either in his aspect or employment; for he was lounging on the divan which we have described, completely dressed, in a close-fitting waistcoat and very tight trousers of black cloth, setting gaiter-wise over a pair of patent-leather boots, the whole turn out a good deal too elaborate for the English idea of a gentleman's morning garb, in the country more especially. He had a voluminous black silk scarf fastened with two large pearl pins about his neck; a rich brocade dressing-gown, and an Algerine *fez* to answer the purpose of a smoking cap upon his head.

Thus got up, as we have said, rather too extensively for Melton Mowbray, he had lounged for nearly an hour, languidly and carelessly inhaling the fumes of a great chibouque, the bowl of which rested on the car-

pet, looking out of the window as earnestly as if he was noting every thing that passed by, but without uttering one word to his friend, who was deeply engaged in an article of the Edinburg Review, on the treaty of *Unkiar Skelessi*, and the policy of Russia.

At this moment the door opened, and a servant out of livery came in, bearing two notes and as many visiting cards upon a silver waiter, which he tendered first to Fairfax and then to his master.

"Ah! just so," exclaimed Matuschevitz, "Cheshire's visiting cards, and begs me to apologize to you for short notice, and so forth, but trusts you will excuse want of formality from consideration of desire to make your acquaintance—my lady wrote that note, I'll be sworn; Chess couldn't have managed that to save his life. Yours is of course the regular thing. Yes, I see."

"The Earl and Countess of Cheshire request the honor of Col. Fairfax's company to dinner on Sunday, 19th, at eight o'clock.

R. S. V. P."

"Well, take your pen, colonel, and indite—happy to do yourself the honor, and so forth; what are you looking so gloomy about, one would think you were invited to fight, not to dine?"

"To tell you the truth, count, I had about as soon do the one as the other; but I suppose the thing is unavoidable, and that I cannot in ordinary decorum shun it if I would."

"Of course, you cannot; and why should you? You did not come to Melton to live like a hermit, I suppose."

"No, I came to *hunt*," replied Fairfax, somewhat ungraciously, "but as this *has* occurred, I'll prepare the answer."

"Is Lord Cheshire's man waiting, Langton?" asked the count; "Ah! exactly," he continued, as the man answered in the affirmative, "then reach me the writing things, I'll write a line too."

And by the time Fairfax had completed his elaborate and formal billet, the count had scrawled ten lines and sealed them, and the companions were again left alone.

"What in the name of heaven, my dear fellow, can be your dislike to dining at Cheshire's? You will meet all the best fellows here at his table, not to say two of the most beautiful women in England. No one gives better feeds—what can it be?"

"In the first place, tell me what sort of person is this Cheshire?"

"Oh! very much like other people—like other men of fashion, I mean; no saint, of course; but no greater sinner than his neighbors. He is very well bred to people to whom he chooses to be well bred; very good humored when he is pleased; he plays high; rides pretty well; and is as agreeable when he holds his tongue, as at any other time; nature certainly did not endow him too liberally with brains; and, for all his Eton education, I do not think that he has assisted nature much."

"Just as I expected," answered Fairfax; "except that you look at him, or at least depict him as you do every thing and every body, *couleur de rose*. I believe this Cheshire to be the most heartless, brainless, soulless voluptuary that ever drew the breath of life—no kind, no generous, no feeling action is recorded of him. An insolent, ungenerous, overbearing aristocrat; unscrupulous with men, faithless and false with women. If he be honorable in his play and turf transactions, it is because he lacks the temptation to be otherwise. No one who knows his conduct to women, can doubt how he would behave to men if he dared, or if it were

his interest to behave ill. I hate to consort with such a man, even casually."

"Yet you must do so, or if you do not, you must live in absolute seclusion. You can go no where without meeting him; and if no one—which I suppose no one does—esteem him *au fond* very deeply, still he is hand-in-glove with every one; and there is not a pleasanter house than his in Melton, or in May Fair."

"All very true, I dare say," replied Fairfax, shrugging his shoulders, *a la mode de France;* "still I don't like it. Four men *here* I have resolved to avoid as much as I can, in consequence of what I have learned of their characters since I have been in England; and though I shall, of course, be civil when I do meet them, I shall avoid meeting them as far as in me lies."

"And who may be the four?"

"Your friend, Lord Cheshire, Henry de R*, Lord Jardinier, and Bellamy. I'll none of them."

"Pardon me, Colonel Fairfax, if I speak to you plainly; you know that I cannot mean to offend you, and that I have seen much more of English society than you have. There is nothing which is held in such contempt and ridicule here, among the three hundred people who constitute *the world*, as the affecting to be better than your neighbors, to take up the part of the Quixotic reformer, and to attempt to put down things or persons in accordance with your own opinion, and not with the dictates of society. To eschew a man markedly on account of those petty, if paltry, vices, which, though contemptible and odious, do not come fairly before the tribunal of the public, is to attack the public itself; and any attempt at dictation of that kind the public will resent and punish. If you avoid Jardinier and Bellamy, for instance, even to dropping their acquaintance *quietly*, that is one thing. The temper of both those men is overbearing and detesta-

ble, and it *is* your concern, whether your associates are pleasant and good tempered or no. To exhibit any marked avoidance on the other hand of De R* and Cheshire, because of vices which cannot directly interfere with you, is to meddle with what is not your concern. If a man cheats at cards, refuses his debts of honor, suffers his nose to be pulled, or does any other overt act, for *this*, society will cut him in an instant, if he were their nearest and dearest friend. And the same of a woman who commits a *faux pas* avowedly, and runs away from, or is divorced by, her husband. Men who are merely stingy, selfish, heartless, or fools, and women who flirt, coquette to the utmost limit of opinion, they may despise and laugh at, but they will not cut; and rightly, for such things being matters of opinion and of rumor *may* be contemned, but *must* not be, and *ought not* to be punished. Therefore, as a friend, I would advise you, my dear colonel, to avoid setting yourself up for a reformer or revolutionizer on your first debut. They would not stand it from one of themselves, much less from a foreigner; and to receive the soubriquet of the Virginia Quixote would be a blow which you never would recover."

"I believe you are in the right, count," said Fairfax, laughing, "and, at all events, right or wrong, I will take your advice. Still, such characters as that I have heard ascribed to this man particularly, are most odious to me. I hear he takes positive pleasure in slighting and giving actual pain to young men or girls just coming out, as noble as himself, but not yet established by the caprice of fashion. That he is habitually rude and haughty to subordinates and inferiors, and worst of all, that, vicious, a voluptuary, and a gambler himself, he spares no pains to make every one with whom he associates as hard, and cold, and selfish, as cruel and as base as he is himself. It will

be hard work for me to keep up the common show of civility toward him."

"I did not know you were so straight-laced, colonel," replied Matuschevitz, laughing; "and pardon me, if I say that I do not think your practice agrees altogether with your principles."

"Who, I straight-laced?" exclaimed the Virginian, starting to his feet. "Not the least bit of it, I assure you, count. On the contrary, if there be one thing on earth that I do most cordially and utterly detest, it is the hypocrite. I, heaven knows! I have no claim to superior virtue; I drink sometimes, I play sometimes —and both of them more than is either wise or good; I make love very often—almost as often as I see a very pretty or a very *piquante* woman. I dare say I do all sorts of bad things, *sometimes;* but what I mean to say is, that I do not make such things the rule and object of my life—that if I do such things at all, I do them from impulse, not from calculation, and am very sorry for them afterward. For the rest, if I do wrongly myself, I had rather cut off my right hand than induce another to do likewise."

"I believe you, my dear fellow, entirely; and I think as you do myself. I have no respect whatever, nor regard for such characters as Cheshire myself; nor do I lead him to suppose I have; but I treat him, when I meet him in society, as one gentleman is expected to treat another. I go to his house because I meet every body that I know, and many persons whom I value there; and I ask him to mine in return, because I am expected so to do, and because some sacrifice of our own prejudices is due to society. But enough of this for the present. It has got to be three o'clock while we are talking morals; suppose we have some luncheon, and then walk down to the stables and take a look at the horses."

"I'm agreed—but I don't care much about luncheon."

"We don't dine till eight, remember, and Cheshire's eight is very certain to be nine."

"Well, as far as some oysters and a glass of Chablis, I don't mind."

The bell was speedily rung, the breakfast things removed, and the natives on the shell, with no condiment save simple lemon juice, and the ice-pail, with the long-neck protruding, took their place.

Meantime, the friends retired to complete their rig, and in ten minutes made their appearance again below; Fairfax having replaced his dressing-gown with a most elaborate French black frock, with a glossy hat of the most extreme ton, lemon kid gloves, and a cane with a great emerald at the top of it. Matuschevitz, more *au fait* to the Melton style, wore a dark brown Newmarket coat with Good-wood club buttons, shepherd's plaid trousers, and a shawl waistcoat, with a blue bird's eye round his neck, doeskin gloves on his hands, and a heavy jockey-whip under his arm.

At any time an English country town or village is a pleasing or interesting sight, but Melton Mowbray is much more than this, it is a curious, a singular, an unique sight, for Melton Mowbray is a *capital;* yes, gentle reader, as distinctly a capital as London or Paris, Washington or St. Petersburgh; Melton Mowbray and New Market, two purely English, *sui generis*, capitals; the one of fox-hunting, the other of racing —each with its ministry, officials, senate, representatives, its every article, point, device, which constitutes an *imperium in imperio.* Time was, until James and Charles the First, the one of evil, and the other of unhappy memory, betook themselves to deer-hunting and racing, New Market was but a petty village in the midst of Chalky Wolds, distinguished only by the dykes and ditches—since nicknamed of the devil

—extant to this day, and still almost inaccessible, by which Boadicea and her brave Iceni strove to repel the brazen infantry of the first Cæsars.

Time was, when the grandsires of the now rising generation, the grandsires of Young England were in the prime of manhood, that Melton Mowbray was but a humble country town, though the centre of the greatest hunting country the wide world has ever witnessed.

In those days fox hunting was a rude and barbarous sport. Fox-hunters rose in the dead of the night to meet at the covert-side by daylight, and trail the fox to his lair, and thence rouse him. They hunted with huge, long-eared, slow, crook-kneed, dew-lapped hounds; they rode short-barreled, short-backed, active half-bred cobs. They found their fox at sunrise, and, if they were very fortunate, killed him about sunset. Now, all is changed. Fox-hunting is a *science;* the feeding, the physicking, the exercising, the breaking of the hounds, the wintering, the summering, the conditioning the hunters, is a matter of as deep lore, of as much difficult indoctrination, as the training of a racer for four mile heats, or preparing a man for a prize-fight or a foot-race.

The men who do the thing, too, are no less changed than the thing itself.

Then it was, the Squires Westerns—the muddy-beer drinking, bad-tobacco smoking, ignorant, illiterate blockheads, who never visited cities, nor thought of decencies or decorums. Now it is the cream of the first men of the first society in the world, for manhood and cultivation, Saxon hardihood and Norman chivalry, aristocratic refinements and popular simplicity combined.

And of these characteristics Melton shows the type. It is still a country town—during the summer season, nothing but the merest of country towns—in shops, in

public buildings, in any thing belonging solely to itself unequal to any village of five hundred inhabitants in the United States. Yet it is filled with villas, empty for one half the year, redolent of every luxury, overflowing with every comfort during the other half; built up with lines of stables, more solid than *our* most massive warehouses, handsomer, and better finished within than most of our country churches, capable of containing the horses to mount ten regiments of cavalry.

On an average a hundred gentlemen would turn out in those days, in scarlet, white leathers and top-boots, six days in the week from Melton Mowbray; and with a less stud than twenty-five or thirty horses no man could do that.

No one could dream of riding to the Quorn without *two* horses daily in the field; the second ridden by a light boy, with a quick eye and good judgment, hovering on the outskirts of the run, riding the chords of arcs and hypothenuses of triangles, and ready at a moment's notice to remount his master, in case of accidents or emergency.

No horse, not the best that ever trod on a shodden hoof, can come again above three times in a fortnight, very few above *twice;* and therefore taking casualties, coughs, lameness, and sometimes deaths, into account, no man can hope to hunt every day at Melton, during the season, without at least twenty-five—scarcely without thirty horses in his stable.

To every five horses one man and two boys are allowed; besides a stud-groom to each stable, a man in his way and line no less important or esteemed than John Scott, the great English, or Sam Laird, the great American trainer, to overlook and be answerable for the whole.

The whole array cannot be counted at less than twenty men and thirty horses, for the field work of

every gentleman who hunts regularly at Melton Mowbray; besides which, half of them bring their families along, beautiful wives, accomplished sisters, French soubrettes, English nursery-maids, men cooks and valets, persons far more important than their masters, in their own eyes, and those of the gazing rustics.

During one half the year, so utterly deserted, that in a walk through its main street you shall not meet one man in five who can do much more than write his name; during the other six months, two men out of every three you meet will be of noble birth, every fourth a baronet, and one in six a peer of a realm—three thousand hunters, worth, taken *en masse*, not less than £350,000 sterling—$1,750,000—and two thousand stable followers.

Conceive this in a town not half so big, nor one-tenth part as pretty as Springfield or Newhaven.

Of a truth, if Melton Mowbray be not a capital, and one of the most wondrous that ever has been seen in this world, we should rejoice to know what were one.

Some such thoughts as these, I presume, had been wandering vaguely through the head of Percy Fairfax, as he walked silently down a bye-street, into which they had turned instantly on leaving their own door, leading to the open country, and the exercising grounds immediately about the town, in the suburbs of which stand the stables.

For some time they met no persons of their own rank, but scores of neatly-dressed, knee-breechesed and top-booted, or kerseymere-gaitered men, with smooth-shaved faces, and short-cropped hair, whom you could have sworn, whether you had met them in Texas or Caffraria, on Mont-Blanc or the summits of the Himmalaya, to be English grooms, every one of whom smirked and nodded, and pulled his top-knot down over his forehead in gnostic greeting to the Rus-

sian count, of whose name they made most unutterable havoc.

Matuschevitz, it may not be denied, watched his friend closely, and he certainly did fancy that he could trace something of secret wonder and admiration concealed beneath an exterior which he set down as a mixture of Mohawk impassibility of feature, and Parisian *nil admirari*.

"Upon my conscience," said the American at length, "these English are an astonishing people."

"True, gallant colonel," replied Matuschevitz, laughing. "But since when have you discovered the fact, or what now moves your admiration?"

"It is not admiration," answered Percy gravely, "but astonishment. Though after all there is something almost admirable in the method and regularity of all this. But to think that all these men, the richest in this land of riches, should annually leave their own demesnes, each larger than a German principality, their country-houses more magnificent than an Italian palazzo, to come and winter in little cottages at which a New York merchant would turn up his nose, while they lodge their horses in stables and their hounds in kennels equal to foreign palaces!"

"There is something in what you say, colonel. Whatever an Englishman thinks it worth while to do at all, he thinks it worth while to do *well*. Field sports are the natural taste of every Englishman, from a peer of the realm to the cadger in his cart, or the tailor on his shop-board; and whatever science can effect, experience substantiate, or wealth procure, that is brought to bear upon the pursuit. I have no hesitation in saying, Fairfax, that there are a hundred stud-grooms, farriers, veterinary surgeons and the like, who have devoted more time to the anatomical and physical study of their patients, the dog and horse; who understand their diseases better, and reap

a larger profit from attending them, in this little country town, than the majority of your country practitioners in the United States have done, or do, in regard to their human clients."

"I don't doubt it, count," said Fairfax, with a smile. "I can't say much for the scientific attainments, or the profits either of a Yankee country doctor. But how the deuce do you know so much about our internal life and habits! you, who say you have never crossed the Atlantic, although sometimes I doubt it?"

"Ah! *c'est mon metier ca*," answered Matuschevitz. "We diplomats are *cense* to know every thing."

"Upon my life! I believe you Russians *do* know every thing. Are you sure count, that you are not born knowing every thing? But who are these two coming to meet us? I suppose you know that."

"I rather suppose I do. Wait a moment, however, and you will know also."

The two who were approaching, though two, were by no means a pair; for they were as dissimilar in character as in stature and appearance.

He to the right was a middle-sized man at that time of some twenty-eight or thirty years, rather thickly-set than otherwise, and with some early symptoms of a tendency to run to fat. His face was full and florid; and, though his features were very regular and his profile decidedly handsome, there was such an expression of listless, languid superciliousness, and such an insipidity in the lack-lustre eye, that the *tout ensemble* was any thing but agreeable. He had a profusion of light auburn—in many persons it would be called *red*—curly hair, on top of which his hat was set very jauntily aside. He wore a broad-checked red and white *batiste* cravat, a claret-colored cut-away, into the left hand skirt pocket of which he had thrust his hand, holding a silver-mounted riding-whip, so as

to bring the tail over upon his hip, a canary-colored waistcoat, and drab riding-trousers fitting as close as his skin.

If he had been, as from his appearance and air he well might, a west-end shopman doing the genteel, or a sporting stock-broker cutting it fat, he would have been voted by every one who saw him, what he really was, a disagreeable, over-done snob, and a most insufferably vulgar puppy. But as he was a very rich, and very-long-descended earl, none of whose ancestors had in the least resembled their descendant, he was the fashion, and the bad exemplar of the dissolute of Young England.

The gentleman who walked beside him was taller by a head, admirably well proportioned, and as fine a specimen of an English nobleman as ever gladdened the eyes of bluff King Harry, or his man-minded daughter, Royal Bess, of both whom it is recorded that they loved to look upon the thewes and sinews of a man.

His features were as fine, as noble, and as handsome as his person and his mien; and his expression the openest, the kindest, and the most unaffected that ever encouraged an inferior to present his suit with confidence.

Whereas the other, despite his insufferable air of pride, affectation and superciliousness, despite his flashy clothes and jaunty air, could hardly be mistaken for a gentleman, this one had such an air of inborn natural aristocracy that, despite the plain, good-humored simplicity of his address, even had he been disguised in the meanest and most clownish garb, no one could doubt for a moment, that he stood in the presence of a nobleman.

"Ah, Matuschevitz, how do?"

"How are you, count?"

"Well, Ches—Good morning to you, duke. Let

me make you know Colonel Fairfax. Colonel, the Duke of Beaufort, Lord Cheshire."

"I thought as much," thought Fairfax within himself, but he said nothing, only bowed and touched his hat, without shaking hands *a l' Americaine*."

"A-h—Colonel Fairfax—charmed—a-h. Had the pleasure—a-a-h—to send my card this morning—a-h. Happy to have the honor, a-h—dinner at eight—yes—Lady Cheshire—a-h."

Very different was the greeting of the Duke, who, when the peer had got through with his stultified St. James Street a-ahing, offered his hand frankly.

"I have had the pleasure of hearing of you before, Colonel Fairfax. Rothesay wrote to me about you. I believe you have a letter for me from our mutual friend Talleyrand. Delighted you have come to see us here; this is the place of all others for a foreigner to see, who wishes to see what is most worth seeing, most peculiar, in us English—this and New Market. On the Continent you will find a thousand things as fine as any we can show you, some perhaps finer, palaces, pictures, architecture, armies—but the world has but one New Market, but one Melton Mowbray."

"I was making nearly the same observation to Count Matuschevitz, just as we met you, sir. In England you make your rudest sports, many of our republican sovereigns would call them *toils*, into a luxury."

"I hope you will not think, on further trial, that we make our luxuries a toil. Our *mediseurs* do charge us, I believe, with something of the kind. But which way are you bound?"

"We are going to the stables to inspect the cattle and make arrangements for to-morrow."

"Are your stables mysterious, or visible to the uninitiated?"

"Exceedingly visible, I assure you. Pray come along, if you have no better way of killing the time before dinner."

"No better way in the world."

"Let us go then. It is not a hundred yards, and I have got some things I am not ashamed to show you, particularly a pair of very fast New York trotters."

"Very fast?"

"Yes. Three minutes together."

"*Andiamo.*"

And therewith they went.

CHAPTER III.

A HUNTING STABLE.

Less than five minutes walking brought the party to the door of the stables, which, unvisited as yet by Percy Fairfax, contained the gallant horses on which he was to make his debut, on the following day, before the great convention of the best sportsmen in all England. He had never as yet ridden once to English fox-hounds, and every one who has ever seen the two knows how widely different is that glorious sport, as pursued in Virginia and some of the southern states of North America, and as performed even in the provincial countries of England, much more at the very metropolis of fox-hunting, Melton Mowbray.

In the latter, no fields less than forty acres, smooth as a Turkey carpet, without a bush or brake to stint the rattling gallop of the thorough-breds, nothing less than which can live behind the racing, high-drawn, fine-bred modern fox-hounds; old white-thorn fences with double rails and ditches, insuperable obstacles to any thing short of the indomitable bottom of English horses and the unconquerable pluck of English riders, or timber palings six feet perpendicular height, or rivulets, like the Whissendine, with ten yards of bright water between its level banks, all to be taken in the stride, without the time to choose a favorable place to take them; foxes that are found in small furze coverts, or gorses as they are called in Leicestershire, and go away straight as an arrow, across country, never doubling or running rings, till they either go to ground without the limits of the hunt, and are so saved, or

are run into by the pack, in the middle of some wide grass field, game to the last; and render up their lives to the triumphant chorus of who-whoop!" add to this a scent so burning, that the hounds rarely stoop to pick it from the tainted herbage; but drinking it with dilated nostrils from the free atmosphere on every breath of which it steams aloft, where pug has passed by, sweep along, heads up and sterns down, all together, so that a table cloth shall cover them, frequently running twelve miles in the hour; no slight pace to be maintained by horses, with twelve or fourteen stone weight upon their backs, often through ground so heavy as to hold them fetlock-deep, sometimes hough-deep, in tenacious clay, and this coupled to the extra exertion of clearing not less than thirty fences, such as I have described, to every mile of country.

In the latter, wide woodlands to be traversed, full of dense brakes and swamps impassable for horses, to which the hunted fox clings for the dear life, running short rings, doubling and dogging before the heavy, deep-flewed, dew-lapped, black and tan, or blue-mottled dogs of the old Southern strain which form the principal material of the Virginian packs; and never facing the open, unless where a field or two intervenes, like a narrow channel parting two continents of woodland; few heavy leaps to be taken, save now and then a snake-rail fence in the open—and a deuced nasty jump it is, too, were they more frequent—and once and again a fallen tree, a drain, or a rivulet in the woodland, the whole not amounting to a dozen fences in a run, and these trivial as compared to English bull-finches, or stake-and-bound raspers; the pace nothing to distress even an ordinary hack in ordinary condition; to conclude, no riding *to* the hounds, for to ride *up* to hounds, or even *near* to hounds, in such country were impossible, and to gallop along the

wood-roads, or through the opener tracts of woodland, cutting off angles and keeping in the inner curve of arcs, so as to hold the unseen pack within hearing, is the acme of excellence in the sportsmanship of the American fox-chase.

All this was of course well known to Percy Fairfax, who was not only thoroughly practical as a sportsman in his native land, but well read, and thoroughly imbued, though theoretically only, in all the principles of the science of sportsmanship abroad. He was a capital horseman, as a horseman; and there was probably no single leap, however dangerous or awkward, at which he would not have put his horse as well, and carried him as clearly over it, as the best rider in all Leicestershire. But to take one fence at your ease, and to take a long succession at your speed, as you may chance to find them in your line, out of bad ground, perhaps with your horse blown or laboring, are two things widely different. Nay, even to gallop a horse across the mole-hill knotted pastures, and the deep meadow-land of Leicestershire and the vale of Belvoir, as he must be galloped, not cantered, or held hard-in-hand, in order to keep a place with hounds, is a thing to be learned, and that difficulty, not to be hit off at first sight by a tyro.

Nor was this, either, unknown to Fairfax; and, indeed, had it been in the man ever to be diffident or shy, or distrustful of his own powers, he would have been something nervous at exhibiting himself in a capacity so strange and so new to himself, before a field so exquisitely mounted, so perfectly accomplished in the art, so critically fastidious in their tastes and judgments, and so likely to regard with polite and courteous tranquillity of sarcasm any failure on the part of a foreigner so bold as to enroll himself a follower of their more than royal pastime, and so unskilful as to fail of going through with it.

But to say truth, a want of confidence in his own capabilities, of a secret belief that he can do any thing, whether tried or untried before, as well *at least* as any other man, if not better, is rarely the defect of any American; it certainly was not that of Percy Fairfax. Nor was it, indeed, to be wondered at, that he had a sufficient stock of self-reliance; for in a youth and manhood spent in many vicissitudes of temptation, trial, and peril, he had been many times cast upon his own resources, and as they had never failed him, it scarcely could be a matter of surprise that he should place much reliance on his own foresight, judgment, and execution.

This self-reliance was not, however, the blind, stultified, arrogant self-confidence peculiar to the ignorant, vulgar, and prejudiced Yankee, who is at all times ready to *guess* that he can do any named thing, not because he has any cause to believe himself able, but because he has no conception of the difficulties of the thing to be done. Fairfax, on the contrary, clearly saw the obstacles in his way before he could become a thorough across-country-rider; and not expecting to electrify older and better sportsmen than himself, or to astonish all Melton Mowbray "with noble horsemanship," was yet confident that he should acquit himself in the field, as not only to avoid ridicule or censure, but to acquire for himself some credit, in an arena so difficult to a foreigner by common consent of all, as an English hunting-field.

He had traveled, moreover, so long and so widely, being moreover as fastidious in his perception of nicetics, and as jealously sensitive of ridicule as if he had been an English nobleman, that he had attained that *ne plus ultra* the *nil admirari*, as perfectly as though he had inherited it as his birthright, and was, therefore, trebly unlikely to be guilty of the least *faux pas*,

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which should make him ring false metal in the ears of the hard-riding exquisites around him.

While he was walking, silently himself, along with his three noble companions of the moment, some such thoughts as these were passing through his brain, and he was prepared to be astonished, and yet determined to exhibit no astonishment, at what he had never yet seen, the internal nicety and perfect order and arrangement of an English stable *menage*. For though perhaps there are no men in the world more perfect both in the theory and the practice of managing, conditioning and training race-horses, especially for four mile heats, which closely resemble the management of the thorough-bred English hunter, or steeple-chaser, than the Virginians, it must also be admitted that their stables are built and furnished and conducted in a scrambling, make-shift kind of way; as different from the regular method of an English stable-department, as are the tactics of a regular regiment from the disorderly movements of a raw militia, or the discipline and silence of a ship of war from the brawl and bustle of a French or Italian merchantman.

They soon reached the doors of the stabling, which had been selected and ordered by the old and experienced stud-groom of Count Matuschevitz for his master, and the young American, who now stood nattily dressed in his close-bodied cut-away coat, long-waisted waistcoat, loose-cut drab-breeches and white-top boots, expectant at the entrance.

"Well, Roberts," said the Duke of Beaufort, who knew him of old for a veteran Meltonian, and whose confidence in his own true nobility and perfect good-natured self-reliance, kept him entirely free from any touch of that snob-aristocracy, which has been alluded to in the case of Cheshire, Jardinier, and others, which led them to treat those who *were*, or whom they affected to hold as being their inferiors in degree or

fashion, with ill-natured superciliousness, or yet more impertinent condescension. "Well, Roberts, we have come to look at your stud; what sort of a lot have you got this year? I suppose I shall find some old acquaintances among the count's, hey?"

"Why yes, your grace," replied the man, with the quiet but unabashed civility of one of those yeoman servants of England, who know thoroughly their own station, and never presuming on it at all, yet appreciate it fully. "Why yes—we've got pretty much all the old ones, except old Reveller, for he never came over that hard thing in the spring from the Coplow, when he got into the Whissendine in a hot lather, and the brook ice cold; and the Rantipole colt, for he threw out a spavin. We 've all the rest of the old ones, and a prime young one or two, 'specially one by Comus out of a Whisker mare, and a spanking Blacklock out of Czarina. The Colonel has got a fine lot, too, your grace; one a silver-gray by Orville from a Whalebone, that will fill your eye, I am certain. I mean to put you on the gray to-morrow, colonel, if you please. The country is pretty deep, and he is all right to go."

"All right, Roberts," answered Fairfax; "but let us get in and see the cattle; what sort of quarters have you got for them?"

"Oh, you have no need to be uneasy on that score, there are no better stables than these in the markets. Master Roberts is a good judge of that, besides these have been the count's quarters, these—how many seasons, Matuschevitz?"

"Seven or eight," replied the Russian; "but I have made them increase them, double them, in fact, since you saw them. There are two separate *menages* now, thirty stalls and six loose boxes to each. Come in—come in—whose quarters are the first, Roberts?"

"Colonel Fairfax's, count," answered the groom,

pulling his forelock down as he made answer, and throwing open the heavy nail-studded oak-door which gave them admittance into a brick-paved vestibule, with a door on each hand, one opening into the feed-room and the other into the harness-room, in which a bright fire was burning, beside which two or three boys were busily employed burnishing bits and stirrup-irons, with store of which the walls were decorated.

A second oaken-door admitted them into the stable, a vast square apartment of sixty-feet in each direction, lighted by a cupola from above, well fitted with ventilators, so that the temperature was equal and pleasant, and the air unpolluted by the odors of ammonia from the litter, which in general render the interior of a stable so detestable to the biped visiters, and so insalubrious to the quadruped inhabitants.

On each of the three sides of this fine hall, was a range of ten large, roomy stalls, nicely bedded with straw, the beds bound at the edges by elaborate plaitings and devices, and the alcoves above fringed with a deep, fantastic hanging of wrought straw, to attract the notice of the flies; and each one of those thirty stalls was occupied by a powerful and well-bred horse, many of which turned their heads and winnied at the well-known step of the stud-groom, making their chain halters and blocks run and rattle through the cleets of the mangers. They were of almost all colors, three or four blacks, with coats glistening like polished marble, one splendid silvery gray, two or three roans and dapples, and the rest blood-bays and deep chestnuts, with a sprinkling of dark browns with cinnamon muzzles and inner thigh markings, but not a single dun or piebald, or soft, fiery light sorrel.

Some were stout, full-quartered, and somewhat cob-made horses, although large and roomy, and with length enough of leg and neck to show that whatsoever qualities they did possess, there was no lack in

their veins of good blood and strain of noble ancestry, and these had, for the most part, the old, short-square cut docks of the olden school

Many more were tall, muscular, long-reached thorough-breds, with splendid crests and long bang tails, the hair trimmed squarely off at the termination of the dock—horses, looking in all respects like racers—horses, which in all probability would have made the best four mile horses in all England, but for the evil practice, which is, I believe, beginning to act seriously in the deterioration of the breed of English race horses; I mean the practice of commencing the racing career of all colts and fillies when they are merely in the gristle, and not half come to the bone, at the infantine age of two and three years, during which all the great prizes are run for. This practice not only tending to break down and destroy, by the tremendous system of training thus rendered necessary, two-thirds of the produce of each year, but materially injuring even those that have powers to go through the training, come out from the fiery ordeal sound, and distinguish themselves as victors; and yet more than all this by incapacitating one-third of the year's stock from going into the training stables at all, as too big, too leggy, too bony, and too roomy, to be brought by any possible process of forcing or conditioning into sufficient flesh, form and muscle to give them even a remote chance of winning as three year olds.

Could these very horses be left untrained and unmolested until five or six years, they would then I believe prove to be the best horses ever raised in England, and we should have far fewer rickety, deformed, light-boned and puny colts and fillies in five years, than are now produced annually to disgrace our turf and discredit our breeding.

Unfortunately the present system of three year old racing, all the great stakes, as the Riddlesworth, the

Oaks, the Derby and the St. Leger, being for at this age, and nothing but the Goodwood stakes and a few comparatively unimportant cups being open to all ages, it is not worth the while of any one to keep his horse, however promising, until he shall have attained his full powers, when there are no adequate prizes, not even of renown and glory, to compensate him for the time, the risk, and the expenditure of money.

It is these horses, which, purchased cheap at the spring racing sales, and suffered to run at large until five or six years old, then turn out the prodigies and paragons, which they prove to be across country with enormous weights, from one hundred and sixty-eight pounds to two hundred and upward on their backs; taking incessant leaps, and running from nine to twelve miles at a stretch across very deep, wet meadow land, at their best pace; and thereby, as I hold, proving themselves fully competent under a proper system of training and racing to run four mile heats against any class of horses in the universe.

If, however, this system has proved injurious to the racing stable, as it can undoubtedly be shown that it has done, it has proved in the same degree advantageous to the hunting stables throughout the land, and more especially in Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, and the midland counties, in which the enclosures are so large and the ground in general so good for galloping, that nothing short of thorough breds have any chance of living with fox-hounds, the breeding and pace of which has been improved within the last few years, so that hunting now, and hunting in the days when Somervill and Beckford wrote, may be regarded as two different species of sport.

In accordance with this change the stables of Colonel Fairfax had been modeled, and as he was personally a capital judge of a horse, and very regardless of expense, he had found little difficulty in filling his

stalls with as fine a collection of hunters as can ordinarily be seen within the four walls of a single gentleman's stable. Out of the thirty horses which it contained all but nine were perfectly thorough-bred, and the remainder having all at the least three or four crosses of pure blood, coupled to such bone and beauty, could scarcely fail to carry a heavy man well up to the hounds.

Several of the thorough-breds were animals of the rarest symmetry—that one especially, of which Roberts had spoken, as a silver-gray by Orville out of a Whalebone mare, and which was alone brought out of his stall and stripped of his body clothes for the inspection of the gentlemen.

He was a trifle over sixteen hands in height, of a rich silvery-gray, with a jet-black mane and tail, and legs from the houghs downward; but in his points and figure it was immediately conceded, even by those critical and most fastidious judges, that he was nothing below perfection.

"Upon my soul," drawled Cheshire in his lazy affected manner, "he is the biggest and stoutest thorough-bred I ever saw. Well up to fourteen stone, I am sure."

"Well up to sixteen, Ches," returned the duke, "and so clean that there is no mistake about his breeding. The finest arm and best let-down quarters I have looked at these six years—and see how finely his withers taper down, what a short back and what a length below. If his action matches his shape he is worth more than a trifle."

"His action on the road is equal to any thing, your grace," replied the stud-groom, speaking for his master. "We havn't had a chance to give him much of a trial beyond a gallop or two and his sweats over the green, but I'll answer for him he can go. He's got a mouth like a feather, but he'll take a pull, too, from

clear spirit, and if he don't leap, why I don't know what like a leaper should be."

"Oh! he must leap, there's no doubt of that, with those legs under him," said Beaufort. "Where did you pick him up, Roberts?"

"It was Colonel Fairfax himself picked him up, your grace; not to say that I should have let him slip, if I'd a had the luck to have 'lighted on him."

"He's a north country horse, duke," continued Fairfax. "I heard by chance of a good stable to sell down in Yorkshire in October, which had been stable-summered and were in condition, given up in consequence of the owner's taking to matrimony on a sudden. So I put myself on the top of the Glasgow mail and ran down myself to look at them. I picked up this horse, and a good chestnut in the corner there; let one of the men unblanket him and bring him out—he is hardly as fine a horse as this, but he has a good reputation both with the Duke of Cleveland and Lord Harewood; as well as a brace of neat covert-hacks, at a figure which, though a pretty big one for the lot, brings this horse and the chestnut pretty low."

"If it brings this horse lower than four hundred, you've made no mistake. If his go is up to his looks, I'll give you five hundred for him any day."

"Well, it *was* under four, but I don't think I'd take five till I had tried him once or twice."

"And afterward, I'm sure you wouldn't," put in Roberts. "Here's the chestnut, your grace," he added; "he's a fine hunter, and a powerful one, and well-bred at that, but he's scarcely equal to the gray, to my notion."

"He does'nt show quite so much breeding," replied the duke, "but he has got blood enough I fancy. A little too close coupled perhaps for our flying country, but he has got stuff enough to send him well through the dirt, and I'll be bound he is a fencer.

Those north country horses are almost always steady, well-made hunters, and are both quick and clever at their fences, but the countries of the packs you name, especially Lord Harewood's, are very close and pewy, and the fault of the horses is, that four-fifths of the time, they have never learnt properly to gallop. The enclosures there are so small that your horse is scarcely over one rasper before he's getting ready to rise at another."

"Well in that case, we must try to teach them, duke," answered Fairfax, laughing; "but the worst of that is we shall have first to learn ourselves."

"I don't believe it will take you very long to do that. But let us move round. Deuced clever bay horse that, and I like that brown next to him, with the cinnamon muzzle. He's not unlike Valentine Magher's 'Slasher,' is he Ches?—and if he is as good, you'll not find fault with his carrying you through the worst part of the valley."

"He is devilish like him indeed. How is he bred, colonel, and how old is he? He might be 'Slasher's' brother, easily enough."

"He's by Smolensko, out of a Waxy mare, and seven years old last grass."

"Slasher is by Smolensko, too, but I don't know what out of."

"Out of Miss Liddy, my lord, by Sultan," said Roberts, touching his hat. "This horse, we call him 'Thunderbolt,' is bred by the same gentleman as raised 'The Slasher,' and Miss Liddy she's half-sister to 'The Slasher's' dam; so that they're near akin, at any rate. He's been ridden two seasons with the Berkeley Hunt, and they call him a good one *there*, and they used to know."

"By Jove! I thought I knew his cut," cried Beaufort. "He was Codrington's, was he not, colonel?"

"He was, indeed. I hope your report of him is a good one, duke?"

"None ever better. I don't know a horse any where, much better, and I have seen him go in the first flight all day long through the vale of Blackmoor, which as a country is only one step behind, if it is behind, the vale of Belvoir. So you may set yourself at ease as to his being well up to the mark."

"And now," said Cheshire, "if I may make a move it would be to go and look at these fast trotters, for they're a style of cattle I have heard a good deal said about, without ever having seen many. Aint they a deuced bore to drive, lug your shoulders out of the sockets, or something of that sort, hey? I think I've heard Wortley, or some of them say so, hey?"

"They have a trick of taking a dead pull, boring I think you'd call it here, when they first come out of the trainer's hands especially, and of expecting to be hallooed at in a most hideous style, but there is not the least utility or object in continuing to drive them so. In fact, as soon as they fall into gentlemen's hands they get broke almost instantly of these habits. I have seen several teams in New York, one of four blacks, owned some years since by H——n W——'s, and another of four bays by De B——s H——r, which could do their three and a half together without breaking their trot, under as light and quick a finger as should needs be. I hate a hard, dead puller myself, and though, driving as we do trotters entirely on snaffle bits, it is necessary to hold them well together and feel their mouths steadily all the time, there is no more reason why they should be hard-headed or stiff-necked brutes than your hunters. I flatter myself mine are neither. But, as you say, we'll go and look at them—where are your trotters, Jacobs—and by the bye, there's plenty of time before dinner, why should not we put them to the wagon,

and let you have a look at them for half an hour? I can give one of you a seat, and mount the other on a nice cantering hack that shall give you a chance to see their action—what do you say to that move?"

"That it's a good one, I"—said Beaufort, looking at his Breguet. "It's only five o'clock now, and you don't dine till eight, Ches, do you?"

"What we call eight, and that is a good deal nearer nine. We've lots of time to see the Yankees go. Which will you do, Beaufort, take the seat with Colonel Fairfax, or back the cantering hack?"

"Oh! behind the trotters for me, by all manner of means," said the duke.

"For my part then, I'll ride," said Cheshire; "if it be a little more work one will have a little better chance to see them."

"I would have my curricle got out," said Matuschevitz, laughing, "but I think the saddle is a better place for galloping in than a curricle, even with a pair of thorough-breds before it; and my high-stepping grays have no more chance of touching Fairfax's trotters, or letting you get a glimpse, except of the dust they leave behind them, unless at a gallop, than you or I of seeing the ladies across the vale on foot. Fairfax can mount you well enough, or I for that matter."

"A—a if it's not too much trouble, I shall be charmed. Have you more horses than you know what to do with, colonel? We have pretty hard work for them here, I can tell you."

"Oh! never fear me, I've got nine or ten beside the trotters. A short gallop will do them good. Put a saddle on Selim, Roberts, and have the sorrels harnessed to the light trotting-wagon. I don't believe, duke, you ever entrusted yourself to so slight and crazy a looking egg-shell, but it is as strong as it is light and easy-running, and over your smooth turnpikes it will almost fly."

"I'll run the risk with your pilotage, colonel. And while they are getting them ready, suppose we go and take a look at the count's stables. You half-promised, Matuschevitz, that you'd have a Cossack thoroughbred or two out here for covert hacks this season. Have you forgotten that?"

"Neither the promise nor the horses, Beaufort. I have not said any thing about them yet, because I wanted to get a little flesh upon, and a little condition into them, before letting you fellows criticise them, after a journey of so many versts and a voyage of so many leagues. But I will have the saddle put upon 'Moscow,' and you shall see one nag from the farthest east, and a pair from the far west together. Fairfax tells me, by the way, that two of the fastest trotters in his country are called 'Moscow'—Lord and Lady, I believe. Is it not so, colonel?"

"Something of the sort, count," said Fairfax. "But you must not pride yourself on that, for if they are called Moscow, it is not after your sacred city, I assure you."

"I never supposed it was," answered Matuschevitz, with a droll smile and a slight leer. "I took it for granted it was after some small western village consisting of a blacksmith's shop, a court house and a tavern, with one bank, built of pine lumber on the plan of the Acropolis, and a Baptist church exactly like the Pantheon. I know you have got a St. Petersburgh about ten miles from Rome, and as many more from Athens, so why not a Moscow, too?"

"Why not, indeed," said Fairfax; "and for aught I know, there may be not one Moscow in the United States, but one in every county of every state in the Union—still our Moscows cannot claim your Russian title even at second or third hand, being so styled as I am informed, by corruption, from the Indian name 'Yamaska,' of a Canadian river, on the banks of which

they were bred; which title has dwindled, or increased, whether of the twain you will, by transmission through sundry mouths of horse-jockeys from the three syllables into simple Moscow. But see, here come the sorrels, duke! Shall we be moving?"

"And here is the Cossack, too," said Cheshire, "with hair enough on his mane and tail to make all the judges' wigs in England for these three hundred years to come—and this trim, bang-tailed bay, for your humble servant. Well, they 're all beauties in their way, past all denial."

"The trotters, most of all," said Beaufort; "they are almost perfection."

"I thought you'd like them, duke."

"I am glad you thought so, colonel, for you must needs have thought me a mere dunce otherwise."

"We had better be off then, or we shall keep Lord Cheshire's dinner waiting, and that would not be altogether *comme il faut*."

"*Allons*, I'm ready."

And they started.

CHAPTER IV.

A TROT, AND A DINNER PARTY.

THE trotters were, indeed, as the duke had said, almost perfection; and although of a cut and character not much understood, nor at that day very often seen in England—for that matter a first-rate pair are no common spectacle in the island to this day, the style not exactly coinciding with the sporting tastes of the people—were yet such as to attract very general attention, and to be adequately appreciated and admired by all good judges of horse-flesh.

Standing about fifteen hands and an inch, with high clean withers and sharp thin crests, they gave a considerable show of blood, though of a very different strain from that of the delicate-limbed, long-striding, arch-necked thorough-breds by which they were surrounded. Yet they had both the neat, small, well set on heads, and one of them had the broad front and *basin* face, as it is technically termed, which is held to imply the existence of an oriental descent. The legs of both were as clean of hair, as compact of bone, and as wiry of sinew, as if they had sprung from a race that could number its ancestors backward in a direct line, to Marske, Highflyer, Regulus, Eclipse, and through them directly to the Godolphin Arabian, the Byerly Turk, or the Darley Arabian, the only three horses of Eastern origin, out of the many hundreds imported, which are believed by the best sportsmen to have really improved the English and thence the American thorough-bred.

Beyond this, however, they differed considerably

from that which would have been in England the type of equine beauty. It is true they had fine sloping withers, excellent shoulders, arms of colossal strength, were well ribbed up, and short-barreled, that their quarters were powerful almost to a fault, and well let-down to the houghs, but their rumps had that peculiar angular fall from a little way behind the whirlbone to the tail, which is known to the sportsman as the goose-rump, and is in Europe generally regarded as a proof of Irish blood, many of the best hunters of that country, as also many, I might almost say most, of the best trotters of this, are observable for this malformation--for such it must be regarded, so far at least as beauty is concerned, though not perhaps activity or speed.

The color of these clever animals, which certainly bore no similarity to the celebrated English cob, much less to the stanhope or cabriolet horse, with which all the bystanders were acquainted, was a deep, rich, glossy chestnut, very far removed, indeed, from the dull and washy tint which is generally known as sorrel; for in the shadow they would certainly have been esteemed browns, perhaps even blacks, but the moment the sunshine played on the smooth and satin lustre of their well-groomed and well-conditioned coats, there was no hue or tint of metallic gloss and radiance which might not be seen playing over them.

Their long, thin manes, and well squared docks were of the same color as their coats, perhaps a shade or two darker; but they had each four white stockings up to the very houghs, and a broad white blaze down the centre of their faces, which, however, far from detracting from their beauty, rather increased it, by increasing their similitude each to the other, and by adding I know not what to their style of jauntiness and peculiarity.

The vehicle to which they were attached by rounded

traces and harness so light, without breechings, cruppers, bearing-reins or blinkers, and fitted with Dutch collars crossing their breasts, instead of the usual heavy collars, that the Meltonians looked at with wondering eyes, perhaps expecting to see it go to pieces like cobwebs at the first stroke of the horses, was an ordinary light trotting wagon, with wheel-spokes about as thick as ordinary walking-sticks, and every thing corresponding thereto in style and finish. And so fragile and toy-like did the whole apparatus show in eyes accustomed to the solid and massive finish of English carriage-builders, that gallant as he was in all senses of the word, and thoroughly acquainted with horsemanship and coaching in all its various branches, the Duke of Beaufort paused one moment, and regarded it with a distrustful eye before he made up his mind to trust his goodly sixteen stone to its slender springs, thin spokes, and tray-like body.

"Never fear, duke," said Fairfax, who had already taken the soft white hand-pieces of the trotting reins into his hands, with a gay smile, "it has carried a much heavier weight than we two, and that, too, over a much rougher ground than we are like to cross today. Why our trotting courses are rough to your Macadamized turnpikes, though they are not so hard upon our horses' feet, that must be admitted; and as for our best roads, with a few far between exceptions, they would make a sorry show beside the worst of your lanes and bye-roads."

"Oh, I assure you, I'm not afraid of your pilotage or your wagon either, but at the same time, after one of our phætons or curricles, it does look rather like a cock-boat after a man-of-war."

"Get away, lads," said Fairfax, in a low tone, with a gentle whistle, so soon as he saw that the Russian count had bestridden "Moscow," and the dandy earl climbed to "Selim's" back, giving his reins a slight

shake as he spoke, and at his word the two clever nags got under way at once, his long, straight whip standing erect in its socket, as if they had been actuated by a single impulse, taking precisely the same stroke, and lifting their legs with bent knees and square action, as truly and precisely as if they had been lounged and trained for months to go together, and stepping rather like the duplicate of one fine trotter, than the best pair that were ever lapped in horsehide. As they wheeled into the back lane by which the party had walked up to the stables, already going, though they had not started many seconds, at the rate of nine or ten miles the hour, so quickly did the true and fleet little animals get to their work, half a dozen or more of the grooms and supernumeraries, who were lounging about on that comparatively leisure day, paused and turned to look after them, with many a whispered comment on the speed, style and appearance of the clippers, and many a murmured note of admiration as to who the strange gentleman might be who was tooling the duke; for with the kindest and most popular man in Melton, if not in all England, there were none there who were not well acquainted.

By the time they had got to the end of the bye-lane, where it turned round the corner of Fairfax's lodging, at the distance of perhaps a mile from his stables, into the main street, they were going well together at the most slapping pace that ever had been seen in the streets of Melton Mowbray, not less certainly than at the rate of a mile in three minutes or twenty miles an hour, as was very evident from the fact that Matuschevitz and Cheshire, though both mounted on thorough-breds, and no bad ones either, had about as much as they could do to keep side by side with them; for the lane having a firm sandy soil, which had been rendered compact by late rains, without being made deep or heavy, was, indeed, as Fairfax said, very nearly

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equal both in smoothness and consistency to the best of American race-tracks.

As they reached the angle, which was a very sharp one, Fairfax took them in hand a little, soothing them at the same time with a whispering word, and slacking his hand to them a trifle after the pull, when they came up quite handily with a toss of their proud heads, and a snort or two, and dropped into a rapid square trot of about ten miles the hour, as steadily and without a fret, as if they had been going no faster from the start, and as if the Cossack thorough-bred, fierce, fiery and intractable, had not been plunging, wheeling, and curveting like a wild horse, side by side with them, impatient of the restraint which would not suffer him longer to maintain with his rival trotters, that hard gallop which could have availed in the long run nothing, against the steady and supported speed of his American antagonists.

"This is astonishing, indeed!" said Beaufort, admiring the perfect breaking no less than the admirable condition of the trotters, which had not cast a gout of spume over their shining coats, nor dimmed the lustre of their glancing chestnut hides by one stain or shade of moisture. "We must surely have been going, then, at the rate of twenty miles an hour."

"I suppose you know, duke," replied Fairfax, "that twenty miles has actually been done recently in New York, within the hour, at a trot."

"Indeed, I did not; nor would I have believed it possible. Why twenty miles in an hour is good galloping for a thorough-bred."

"Undeniably it is; nevertheless, a half-bred colt, out of a trotting chestnut mare known as Fanny Pullen, got by imported English Trustee, did it handily. These little nags of mine have done seventeen and a half together in the hour, and at any moment; and at a moment's notice, I would back them to go a single

mile together, driving them myself alone, in two minutes forty seconds, or five miles in 16 minutes. That off-side horse, duke, which is a thought the fastest, has done a mile in 2.27½ in single harness, and the other can do it under 2.30."

"And are such wonders common in America—what are such cattle worth?"

"To say truth, they are neither wonders nor common. There are always a good many, say a dozen or two, perhaps more, in the different large cities, kept not for pleasure, but for matches, that can do a good deal under 2.36 from that down to 2.29; but still their number is not legion; nor though a good many private gentlemen in all parts of the country keep 2.36 horses for their own private amusement, still such do not number by hundreds in the whole country. Their price varies according to shape, beauty, endurance, soundness, and the like. These stood me in four thousand dollars and a little more—you may call it about 900 pounds. You can scarce get sound and showy horses cheaper."

"Despardieux! I should think not. But here comes a Stanmore livery, Cheshire's carriage, with *la belle comptesse*, whom you have not seen, I believe, but with whom you are to be dazzled at dinner to-day, and Anson, riding by the window like a dutiful *sposo* and brother; so I suppose his pretty wife is there too. Suppose you show them what the Yankees can do, colonel. Let them go here a bit, I beseech you. The mile stone is just opposite the club-room yonder; and you have just room to get them going before you pass it. The next is at the fork of the road straight a-head; I want to time them; and there, by Jove, are Vauxhall, and Cecil Forrester, and both the Mac donalds, and Jardinier, and I can't see who besides, all lounging at the door, or in the windows. Let them go, if you love me, colonel, and give them something

to talk about, just for once. It will be a charity, I assure you."

"As you say, duke," replied Fairfax; "but take my watch if you want to time, it is an independent quarter second. Stop her now, and start her just as we pass the mile stone; and stop her again as we pass the second—are you up to it?"

"*Tant soit peu.* I picked it up a little from a compatriot of yours, Mr. Corbin."

"Oh, Frank—of course. Not a compatriot only, but a co-Virginian. If you learned of him, you are a good hand at it I doubt not. Get away, lads. Off!"

And away they went at the word at a tearing pace; for though by far too well broke to rake or pull, or even snatch their bits when it was not their cue to go, still both their bloods were well up, and the instant they knew by the tightened rein and taughted hand of their driver that go was the word; go they did, and in earnest, increasing their pace at every stroke, and making the gravel and small stones, launched by their quick falling hoofs against the sounding dash-board, rattle and patter like a March hail-storm. So rapidly did they shoot past the carriage of Lady Cheshire that, although Percy Fairfax looked with all his eyes, he could catch but a passing flash from a pair of beautiful black eyes, framed as it were by a profusion of black ringlets, which waved across the lovely features, as she leaned a little forward from the window to catch a glimpse of that fast fleeting meteor-wagon, and to recognize with a rapid kiss of her gloved fingers the deep bow of the Duke of Beaufort.

But as they whirled past the windows of the club-houses, now crowded to overflowing, and went by the mile-stone which was in this instance to act as their starting post, with Beaufort evidently marking the time on a stop-watch, and Cheshire and the count tearing along, literally as who should say the devil

take the hindmost, the wonder and admiration of the young *cognoscenti* and ἱππόδαμοι of Melton broke out into a loud hubbub of questions and answers, and odds bet and taken, cries of surprise and admiration, not less than of delight, at the occurrence of any thing that should break the long and slow monotony of a Melton Mowbray Sunday morning.

Before they had cleared the first mile-stone, the occupants of the club windows were all on the steps or in the street; and happy they whose hacks were waiting at the door, for as quick as they could grasp the reins and mount without so much as setting foot in stirrup, *hey presto!* they were off at full gallop, riding as if for the dear life, in pursuit of Matuschevitz and Cheshire, who were now literally spurring, and unable at that to overtake the spanking square trot of those rattlers—for there was not a particle of darting or pointing in their regular and even step. The horsemen had been perchance sixty or eighty yards behind the wagon when it started, and though if abreast and at their speed when the trotters passed the mile-stone, they could undoubtedly have kept abreast with them, even at that slashing pace, they had not a chance of making up the lost way, nor did they gain upon them a yard until they had shot past the second mile-stone on the Lincoln turnpike, and had slackened their pace. A minute or two afterward they had pulled up and were standing stock still, champing their bits, tossing their heads, and evidently by no means disinclined to try another heat of it.

The duke had jumped out of the wagon the moment they stood still, and was now walking round them, observing every symptom of wind in their slightly heaving flanks and wide-extended nostrils, but not one sign could he discover of weariness or blowing after what had seemed to him an extraordinary exertion, much

less of distress, or any defect in their wind, bone, or sinew.

The next moment they were surrounded by a crowd of eager and animated inquirers, some begging to be introduced to the owner of the wonders, some all agog to know their history, their local habitation, and their name; some earnest to learn what the time had been, whereby to solve the question of the "ponies," the "fifties," and the "hundreds" which had been liberally bandied to and fro and the result, and all agreed on one point, that never before had such trotting been seen in England.

"What was the time, Ches?" cried young Peyton, one of the best judges of pace in the United Kingdom; "was it a match against time?"

"Nothing of the sort—only a spurt, to show us what they could do."

"The devil!—and what did they do?"

"You must ask Beaufort, he kept the time. Something better than a mile within three minutes."

"Oh, you be hanged!" cried coarse Jardinier; "why that's fifteen miles an hour almost, ain't it?"

"Almost, Jardinier," shouted Tom Gascoigne. "Yes, a mile in three minutes is *almost* fifteen miles an hour. Three times fifteen is sixty-one, you know; and there are just sixty minutes in the hour."

"There, did not I tell you so, Vauxhall," said Jardinier, triumphantly to his companion, who was laughing at him. "Did not I tell you it was almost fifteen."

"Didn't they teach 'rithmetic as well as reading and 'riting at the *Charter-house*, Jardiner," asked Cecil Forrester, almost splitting his sides at the hard-riding viscount's magnificence of snobbish ignorance.

"Confound the Charter-house!" responded Jardinier sulkily; "who the deuce knows what they do? I

was not at the Charter-house. Who the deuce ever was—what gentleman, I mean?"

"Why I was for one; and you might as well have been, I think, for I am sure you might have learned there that twice three make six, and twenty times three sixty," said the son of a rich banker, rather a favorite with the young dandies and nobleman, on account of his manliness and good-nature, as well as his aptitude and skill at all bold sports and gallant pastimes, which ever wins its way, in England especially, among the upper classes.

There was a general laugh in which every one joined heartily except the sulky, proud, and penniless peer, who had been expelled from Eton before he had cleared the fourth form, and who now answered doggedly, and with an air of undoubted superiority,

"I was at Eton, my good fellow, and they don't teach that kind of thing there, you know—no buying and selling there. This *orthography*, or whatever you call it, these two-and-two tables are all very good for bankers, you know, and merchants, old fellow: we don't trouble ourselves about such things, you know—*we* don't!"

Fairfax raised his eyes quickly to meet the eyes of Matuschevitz, as though he would have reminded him of the conversation which had passed between them that morning; and his friend who had anticipated his glance, and met it, smiled merrily, and nodded his head, and then laying his finger on his lips, and shaking his brow in dissent, looked away toward Beaufort, who just then took up the word.

"Yes, yes, Jardinier," said he, "you're quite right. There was no *orthography* at Eton in my time; and why should there? it is part of our parliamentary privilege to be held excused from any thing so 'base and mechanical,' as old Claverhouse, or Rob Roy, would have said, as reading, 'riting, or 'rithmetic.

And we peers ought certainly to stick to our privileges as we would to our order."

"Of course we ought," said Jardinier, with sullen and dignified assent, for he was by far too thick headed to perceive, and too conceited to imagine that he could be the subject of mockery to whom he deemed or termed his friends, never having been in all the course of his days, himself, a friend to any man.

"But who ever heard of such time as this?" continued the good-natured duke, almost repenting the well-deserved, though by the culprit unappreciated, castigation which he had inflicted on the stupid and arrogant lordling. "What do you say to that, Anson—what say you, Forrester?" as these two rode up a little way in advance of Cheshire's handsome carriage. "A mile done, on a square trot with myself and Colonel Fairfax, not an ounce short of 28 stone the two, I'll bet a cool hundred on it, without a word, or a break, or a touch of the whip, in—what do you think? Not one of you'll believe it—two minutes and thirty-seven seconds!"

"The deuce!" "You don't say so!" "Whose are they?" "Where do they come from?" And again there was a hubbub of inquiries, admirations, glorifications, and what not, until Fairfax, who had gone out to drive that morning an obscure, and so far as Melton Mowbray was concerned, an almost unknown individual, got out of his wagon at the steps of the club-house, to which he was heartily welcomed, and found himself, as Byron had done before him, on awakening after the publication of Childe Harold, famous.

Two of his grooms had followed him at a convenient distance, and to one of these, hight "Woodruff," a scion of that renowned family of trotting trainers, drivers, and riders, who have won so many laurels on the Centreville course at New York, and the Hunting

Park at Philadelphia, were the pair of phenomenons entrusted, and after being duly blanketed, were led away as fast as the admiring concourse, first of gentlemen, then of gentlemen's gentlemen, and lastly of stud-grooms, boys, and riders would allow it, to their stable.

An hour or two glided away very pleasantly at the club; our Virginian was introduced to every one worth knowing, and, what was more agreeable, every one that was worth knowing, seemed very glad to know him. Nor did any thing happen in any way likely to annoy his *amour propre*, or tread, sensitive and jealous as he was of men's opinions, upon what a lively Frenchman has not inaptly called the corns of his mind. Once he did, indeed, overhear Jardinier expressing his wonder to Tom Gascoigne, Dick Oliver, Cecil Forester, and a few others, that Colonel Fairfax, who after all was only an American—he would have said "Yankee," but that he supposed that term to indicate some almost unknown variety of the human race—should be so *white*, and should dress and speak so much like other people. "One has heard, you know," this genius continued, who has latterly become by the way a poetical contributor to the fashionable annuals—"that they are copper-colored, you know, and wear scalp-locks and blankets, and make a strange sort of snuffing through their noses, which they call talking, you know; and which white folks call a war-whoop. I've half a mind to ask him about it."

"I would keep it a half mind," replied Tom Gascoigne, laughing as if he would kill himself; "at least I would not do it, were I you, for a thousand; for whether he wears a scalp-lock himself, or takes scalps from others, I don't know; but I don't think he looks a very likely fellow to take much nonsense, or to have the most profound respect for the privileges of peers, whether they understand arithmetic or no."

But the absurdity and ignorance of the young puppy rendered it impossible to be annoyed, much less seriously angry with him; and when Matuschevitz whispered in his ear that it was getting to be time to walk home and dress for dinner, the Virginian left the company certainly with modified dislikes or disinclinations even toward the very snobdom of the English aristocracy, and with a very cordial feeling of respect and liking for the simple mannered, frank-spoken, open, cheerful, manly, and unpresuming gentlemen who, he was not slow to perceive, formed at least nine out of ten out of the collectaneum of sportsmen, whether ennobled or no, who had offered him so earnestly and unaffectedly the right hand of good fellowship, on this his first introduction, as an unknown foreigner, to one of their most intensely national and thoroughly exclusive cliques.

Nor could he refrain from expressing something of this strain of feeling to his Russian friend, as they sauntered slowly homeward. "Our people," he said, "could not believe at home, that these men are the very flower of that English aristocracy of which they have heard so much, and whom they believe to be so haughty, so arrogant, so ignorant, and so exclusive. I assure you, count, there is much more of that sort of social impertinence and cliqueism, much more of arrogance and exclusiveness among the *soi-disantes* fashionable sets of our American mercantile cities, than among these men, who are supposed to hold themselves the very *creme de la creme de la terre*."

"And who do really so hold themselves, *mon cher*," replied the minister. "But, though very generally believed, there is no greater error than the opinion that most or many Englishmen of good standing at home are exclusive or arrogant. They associate, when at home, with their own caste, because there is no other caste with which they can agreeably or consist-

ently associate. Abroad they seek out those with whom they have feelings and ideas, and yet more amusements in common—those who have not they neither exclude nor avoid, but simply do not chance to notice or seek out, because they find no cause why they should do so. There are ignorant asses, and ill-natured assuming puppies in all classes; and I dare say, my dear colonel, your knowledge of New York, and its fashionable characters, might call to your mind some ignoramuses as great as Jardinier, and some dandies more exclusive and insolent than Cheshire, who have no merit equal to the fearless horsemanship of the former, and the *savoir vivre* of the latter, and who are more assuming and ridiculous, than either."

"Of course, and their name is not one or two, but legion," said the Virginian, laughing; "but, once more, how comes it that you always *locate*, as we should say, your American characters so well? You ask me that question about New York, and perforce I am bound to answer 'ay!' Had you put the same about Boston, or Philadelphia, or any of our southern cities, I could, perhaps, have conscientiously said 'no.' How is it, Matuschevitz?"

"I told you before," said the count, laughing, "*que c'est mon metier a moi, en qualite de diplomat*, and who knows perhaps *en qualite de Russe aussi*, or as you would term it at a public meeting, as a *Roossian* Barbarian, to know something about all countries with which we have or may chance to have foreign relations. *De plus*, we have had two or three people of our own among you who have seen something of society in America, and have marked the differences between the different cities, so that we are not so ignorant of the great New York fashionables—the J—eses, and M—ns, and J—dds, and P—ans, H—nies, and S—ms, and all the other tailors and candle-makers, and slave-traders, and chandlers, who are too aristo-

cratic to know common lawyers, or authors, or physicians—as you would suppose us to be. But enough of this for the present at least. Let us go dress; and then at least if you don't admire the noble men, I'll make a bet of it I show you something to admire in the noble women of England, two of the very loveliest of whom you will meet to-night."

Half an hour sufficed for the appareling in all due form of our friends for the dinner party, and a drive of ten minutes or more in a Russian phaeton brought them to Cheshire's hunting quarters; and nothing, perhaps, that he had yet seen, so much moved Fairfax's admiration of the thoroughness of English system, as the furniture, the inhabitableness, the keeping, *tout ensemble*, and the complete domestic air of this, a mere hunting-box for three or four months of the season, which in all respects resembled the permanent abode and accustomed residence of some rich proprietor. It was small, indeed, but every part was unexceptionably perfect; the ladies' drawing-rooms full of *bijouterie* and trinkets, of feminine work and feminine accomplishments, redolent of those delicate sounds, sights, accompaniments, and odors, which ever announce and accompany the presence of high-bred, refined and accomplished women—the other rooms replete with every thing that could be possibly desired, yet showing no superfluity of any thing, not only attracted his attention and pleased his fancy, but elicited from him some self-admitted satisfaction with that standard English principle of doing every thing that it is worth the while to do at all, as well as it possibly can be done, and in one place as well as another.

When the ladies, too, made their appearance, he could not but admit the truth of Matuschevitz's boast that he would show him two of the loveliest women he had ever looked upon, and neither while he gazed upon their charms, and laughed and talked merry and soft

nonsense with them, nor when he pondered over the different styles of their extraordinary loveliness, could he bring to his recollection any thing so fair as either of the two sisters, much less any thing fairer nor could he make up his mind which was the lovelier of the two.

The dark-ringleted and dark-browed Cheshire, with her wild, flashing, dark eyes full of unearthly spiritual light, her high and somewhat attenuated features, her slender, graceful figure, her high-born air, and proud, majestic gait, that seemed almost too proudly delicate to tread the earth which might mar the divinity of her footsteps.

The soft, voluptuous Isabella A*, with her great, full blue eyes, her skin whiter than mountain snow, yet flushed with a rosy lustre as of the sunset on the stainless glaciers of *Mont Blanc;* her lips ripe as a peach in August, and rich as the tints of a clove carnation; her plump and falling shoulders, her exquisite and womanly bust, round arms, and glorious figure—oh! pair not to be surpassed, not to be equaled in your day, from east to west, from north to south, round the wide world; years have elapsed, the fourth part of a century has rolled over, since first I saw your maiden sister bloom, out-dazzling the eyes of all beholders, out-shining all the rivalry of loveliest coeval beauties. Wives now, and happy mothers, with daughters scarce so lovely as yourselves, glittering and enthralling where ye shone enchantresses of old, I think of ye, but as I saw ye last, ere time or sorrow, which must be to all mortals, had dimmed one sparkle of those lustrous eyes, or blanched one hair of those glorious tresses, lovely ye must be still, and lustrous; but with a loveliness and lustre different from what I then beheld, different from what yet a little later than I, Percy Fairfax beheld, and would have perhaps loved to admiration and to madness, but that he was saved by the presence of *two* beings exquisitely, yet how equally

bright, and with a brightness how wondrously dissimilar.

The evening passed like a dream, nor did the young Virginian feel himself for a moment out of place, or a stranger at that table, so distant far from his own home, so different in all things from the wildest and most romantic of his imaginings. It needs not to say that the cuisine, the wines, the every thing was exquisite, when Cheshire was the host, the guests Beaufort and Forrester, Anson, the two McDonalds, Jem and Aleck, and with the world-famous Alvanley, besides our hero, and those two radiant sisters.

It was a late hour before they broke up, for the gentlemen followed the ladies to the drawing-room early, and music and singing were interchanged with ecarte and chicken-hazard; and it was not until he awoke next morning from dreams of Cheshire's bright eyes, and Isabella's glowing form, that Fairfax recollected that during the whole evening in that the metropolis of horsemanship and the chase, there had been no fields fought over again, nor any mention of fox-hunting or of hunters.

CHAPTER V.

A COVERT SIDE.

Had every thing been prepared to order, with a view of gratifying to the utmost the wishes of the keen assembled fox-hunters, it could not have been improved on the Monday morning succeeding Fairfax's arrival at Melton Mowbray.

There had been rain enough during the past days to render the country more suitable for holding scent, and yet not enough to make it inconveniently heavy for horses of sufficient stamina. It was precisely such a dawn as is prescribed in the famous old hunting song, for "a southerly wind and a cloudy sky" did, indeed, "proclaim it a hunting morning;" nor was there a single dew-drop gemming the thorn-bushes, or any of that low-creeping mist on the low grounds, or rising net-work on the grass, which augur badly for the lying of the scent, inasmuch as while the process of exhalation is going on, it would appear that the delicate particles which hold the effluvium of the beast of chase in suspense, are exhaled likewise together with the watery globules among which it was deposited.

At an early hour—early for them, be it understood, for it is not now the mode of Melton to get up as our forefathers did, hours before the sun, and painfully hunt up the cold trail of the fox to his lair—when Matuschevitz and his friend were aroused by the valet with shaving water and the needfuls of the toilet, the word went that the sun had shone brightly an hour or two before—that is to say an hour or two after his late December rising—but that the sky was now all

overclouded, and the south-westerly wind as soft as if it were young May and not mid-winter.

Half past nine found them in the breakfast-parlor, similarly rigged in plain scarlet dress-coats, white kerseymere waistcoats, white buckskin breeches, and top-boots, with blue-bird's-eye handkerchiefs about their necks—the true dress, and the only true one for the genuine Meltonian—though a few years before the time of which I write, it was the fashion to run down the leathers as snobbish, and to vote nothing correct but white cords—and the handsomest dress, be it observed, in the wide world for a well-made man, whether sportsman or no.

There was no necessity under the sun for hurrying, since *more Meltonico* the hounds do not meet until eleven, nor are thrown into covert until half-after, or by'r lady! nearer twelve.

"Very well—very well, faith!" said the count, laughing, as the Virginian made his entree perfectly self-possessed and quiet. "You look as if you had been born in pink and leathers, as I believe Osbaldiston was, and Sir Tatton into the bargain, for that matter; though I would lay a hundred to a shilling you never had a top-boot on your leg before in your life."

"You may swear to that, count. But these fellows get one up with no trouble to himself whatever."

"Trust them for that," replied Matuschevitz, "with Pike and Elphick for his leathers, Dean and Davis for his tops, and Stultz, Willis, or Nugee for the rest of his outfit, one may be pretty sure of not putting his foot in it. By the way, whose saddles do you use?"

"Whipple's, of course. I used his saddlery long enough before I left Virginia, and I should hardly cut him here. Give me a cup of black tea while you are about it, I don't go the café in a morning—some of that prawn curry, Antoine, and a slice of that dry toast."

"Lay in a good stock, Fairfax; no luncheon to-day, recollect; and as likely as not, a late dinner to boot."

"How far off is the meet—uck—uckle—what the devil do you call it? It is as bad as some of our Virginian names, which stuck so fearfully in poor Tommy Moore's jaws.'

"Uckleby Gorse. Why yes, it is almost as great a jaw-breaker as 'Rappahannock,' 'Occoquan.' Oh! not more than eight miles off. We can do it in half an hour easy. If we get off by eleven, or a quarter before, it will be lots of time. What horse do you ride first, Fairfax?"

"'White Moonbeam' for my first; and 'Thunderbolt,' brother or half brother, or whatever he is, to 'Slasher,' for my second."

"No one better mounted in the whole field than you will be. Only mind you don't discredit them. Give me a wing of that cold partridge, will you; and, Antoine, a glass of the white Maraschino. Now, pardon my giving you a word or two of advice *mon chere*, as I am an old hand here, and you a novice; not that I doubt you can sit and manage a horse as well at least, very likely better than I can myself; but there are two or three things that it will be just as well you are put up to. In the first place, nothing is so desirable for a man, who wants to take his own line and go well to the hounds, as to get a good start, for then you are out of the crowd in a twinkling, and can get away with them handsomely without being either crossed at your fences, or ridden over, if you chance to get a fall."

"I see—I see; but the how—show us the how, count."

"Why, as soon as the fox is holloaed away, get resolutely forward at once; let nothing stop you; better take two or three big ugly fences in cold blood at

first, when other people, not liking them, are jamming the gateways, and blocking up the bridges, than twice as many later in the day."

"Well, that is easily done enough. Who is the best man to look to? I don't mean to *follow*, you know, but to look to for the direction in which the fox is heading before the hounds are out of covert."

"Oh, there's half a dozen! None better than Val. Magher, or Harry Goodriche, or Frank Holyoke, or Campbell of Saddell—any of these are good as gold; but pin your faith on the sleeve of no man. Ride hard and ride steady. Lay yourself forty or fifty yards to leeward, nearly abreast of the leading hound, but perhaps thirty yards or so back of him. Keep your eye on him all the time, and as he turns, so turn you; and look out if he throws up his head, or turns short upon you, hold hard—pull your horse short up on the instant."

"Any thing more?"

"Not much. Take your fences as you find them. No time for looking out for easy places. Hold your horse's head hard and straight at it, and if it needs be, cram him. Take care to cross no man's line, 'specially at a fence. If there is a check, jump down from your saddle and turn your nag's nose to the wind, if it be but for a minute. It shall be worth a mile to you in a long run. You see I don't fear for your nerves, but only for your knowledge of this English science—for to ride well to fox-hounds is a science, and a hard one too, I assure you."

"I thank you for your good opinion, and I do not think you need fear me on that score; if I were inclined to be nervous, it would be rather at the idea of doing a gaucherie, or, as your friends here would call it, something snobbish, than of getting a fall at a rasper."

"Or of coming to grief, colonel."

"Coming to grief—ah! there you are too much for me, count. Coming to grief—and what may that be, I prithee?"

"Why, you will understand, my good friend, that in modern fox-hunting, we ride no longer, as they did in King George the Third's day, when the man who came in first at the death, it mattered not how, perhaps by riding all the lanes, cutting off corners, and shirking fences, by knowledge of the country, was the best man, and won the honors of the day. *Nous avons changé tout celá*, now-a-days, and the best man is he who lives longest, nearest to the hounds, riding his own line manfully and straight, no matter for his place at the end, though, of course, he who is best from first to last, is the best of all. When you fall into the second flight, when you get so thrown out, either by such a false turn, or such a fall as prevents your being in the same field with the hounds, or if your horse stands still, or dies, you are said to come to grief. But some one must come to grief, remember, always; and if it do not happen till at the butt-end of a severe burst, or if it be by an unavoidable mishap, there is no shame in it—it may be in case of a very bold, though unsuccessful leap, the reverse."

"I see. I shall try not to come to grief, then, in the first field, or at the very first fence. That, I suppose, will save a *novus homo* from ridicule."

"A *novus* is never ridiculed *here*, if he rides boldly, and makes a good offer at his own line. Every one here knows that riding *well* to fox-hounds requires a great many combinations—a very bold heart, a very light hand, a very firm seat, and these three are nothing, unless combined with a very quick eye, a very cool head, and a very clear judgment. So that for every stranger who goes tolerably, ten go wretchedly at the first start; and if one give himself no airs, commit no absurdities, but be simple, frank, and

manly, he will get on at Melton past a doubt, and make both acquaintances and friends, even though he came unintroduced and a stranger."

"I note your advice, and will take it. But I see our hacks are before the windows, and here comes James with our hats and overhauls. Hand me that taper, and I will light a cigar; then, unless you have still another last word, let us be off. I want to be at work, and I am dying for a look at the lady-pack."

"I have a last word—but *one*. Here it is; remember, the worst thing you can do is to refuse a necessary fence, because that looks like funking. The next worst is to take an unnecessary one, because that looks like display, which is snobbish, and takes the powder out of your prad, which is, or may be, ruinous. And now to horse and away! and see, there go Beaufort and Forrester, and here come the McDonalds, and half Melton at their back—away! deuce take the hindmost."

The hacks were, indeed, waiting—and two cleverer or better need not to be bestridden by mortal man; Fairfax's was a switch-tailed iron gray, quite thoroughbred; and though a little pertaining to that type of beast which is familiarly known as a weed, being somewhat ewe-necked, and a little tucked-up in the flank, it yet had so very many good points in the long, sloping shoulder, the deep and roomy chest, and the breadth of its loins, beside having four as good legs under it as often falls to a covert-hack, after its second season, that none but a very superficial observer would have apprehended its sufficiency to carry even a heavier weight than that of Fairfax for a short distance.

Matuschevitz did not on this occasion bring his Cossack, Moscow, into play, but backed a powerful chestnut trotting cob, for which style of *monture*, a

good deal to the wonderment of the Meltonians, he had no inconsiderable penchant.

Meanwhile their cigars were lighted, their beavers donned and secured by a black ribbon to the collars of their pinks, their buckskin gloves had been assumed, and the hunting-whips, or, to speak more correctly, the stocks of the hunting-whips, *minus* the thongs, thrust under the left arm as they mounted; and just as a clattering cavalcade, all in scarlet jackets, with cloth spatterdashes over their boots and white leathers, came tearing down the street at a hard gallop, smoking like as many animated steam-engines, they, too, wheeled from their door to the left, and then to the right, and greeted by a merry shout of gratulation, rode onward merrily, surrounded by that gay and goodly companye, on the high road toward Lincoln.

After they had ridden perhaps a couple of miles, the party, consisting of Aleck and Jem McDonald, than whom two better fellows never rode, Tom and Dick Gascoigne, Horace Pitt and Harry Peyton, besides our friends, the Virginian and the hunting diplomatist, just as they were slackening their pace a little, seeing that there was a toll-gate just ahead, which, with the hounds not running, it behooves every man to pay, there came a harsh cheer from behind, and as two or three of the company turned in their saddles to see who or what was come, the short and slender form of Jardinier was seen bending over the withers of a neat black filly, which he was spurring furiously along in mad emulation, seeking, although there was not the slightest hurry, to overtake those ahead of him, till she was covered from counter to tail with white lather.

"Just like Jardinier," said Cecil Forrester, "cursing her with all his breath at every dig of his spurs, I'd almost take my oath. What a d——d shame!"

"I almost wish she'd break his neck," said another. "I'm sure he richly deserves it."

As the last charitable wish was uttered, the party had all pulled up in front of the gate, about opening which, from some not very apparent reason, there was some little delay, when a second shout from Jardinier made them first turn round for the second time, and then open their ranks in haste, moving to the right and left in order to make way for the madman.

"Out of the way! out of the way!" he shrieked; "d—n it all, are you afraid of a little gate like that, or do you funk the pike-man. Out of the way, and let me show you how to do it!"

They scattered at the cry, for knowing the reckless character of the rough-rider, they were well assured that the next minute he'd be in the thick of them; and on he came at full speed, over the hard Macadamized road, intending evidently to take the stiff five-barred gate in his strike.

"Don't, Jardinier, don't—what folly!" cried Lord McDonald, holding up his hand to wave him back. "He's opening the gate now."

But the warning was all in vain to one who never in his life gave any heed to warning. On he came at full tilt, giving the black mare the spur, and lifted her at the leap with a sort of cheer. Bravely she rose, and although half-blown, and put full too fast at it, would certainly have cleared the gate; but in the very point of time when she rose at it, the turnpike-keeper unconscious of what was passing, having received from Matuschevitz payment for the whole party, flung the gate open, so that it swung out directly in front of the filly as she took it. No horse that ever was foaled of a mare could now have got over in safety; and after a fruitless writhing scramble to clear herself of the obstacle, she went down on her knees and nose on the hard stony road, on the farther side, breaking the former fearfully, and throwing her rider on his head with such violence that his hat flattened like a crushed

egg-shell, and that he, after stretching out his arms with a deep groan, lay stunned and senseless. In an instant the whole party was dismounted and around the sufferer; and Tom Gascoigne, whose words had so strangely coincided with the occurrence, and were so widely at variance from his warm feelings and kind heart, was prodigal of his care and assistance.

"Poor fellow! poor fellow!" said he, "I am afraid he is gone, indeed, and forever! bring water some of you, for God's sake."

A bucket was speedily appropriated, and on the application of a very sufficient dose of cold water, the patient soon opened his eyes, stretched himself, and a moment afterward stood erect as if nothing had happened, giving the earliest symptom of a return to his senses, not by thanks to the friends around him, but by a deep and beastly oath at the unfortunate beast which had given him the fall, and which, though innocent, was by far worse hurt than her merciless and reckless master.

So soon as it was ascertained that the fellow—for if he were a peer, he was no less a fellow, and a low one—had sustained no serious hurt, not one of the party felt the slightest sympathy for him, or desire to assist him further, but mounting as quickly as they could they rode off at a hard gallop toward Uckleby, leaving him *plante la* beside his lame hack, wondering how the deuce he should get to covert, and swearing furiously at the idea of being late for the meet, until when his patience and his hopes had both well nigh expired, a phæton came up from Meltonwards, containing two or three of his acquaintances, who gave him a seat, leaving his poor hack to such accommodation as the cow-stable of the turnpike could afford, until the man who had charge of his hunter should return for her.

Meantime Fairfax and the rest had pricked gayly

but steadily onward, until at the distance of about a mile, to the left of the road, they got the first sight of Uckleby Gorse, a long, irregular, straggling furze covert, stretching along the northern brow of a gentle acclivity with a few tall old trees scattered here and there above the low undergrowth, but nothing that one could call a wood.

Even at this distance the scene was gay and animated in the extreme, and such as no other land but England ever has exhibited, or probably ever will exhibit. In a large grass-field, divided by two or three enclosures from the covert, and containing at least fifty acres of pasture, the many-colored and glossy pack were slowly parading to and fro, to the number of full five-and-twenty couple, not varying an inch in stature between the highest and lowest, and so well matched in speed and strength that they could run together on a breast-high scent through the longest run, in as close array as ever flew a plump wild fowl. These were attended by no less than four men, a huntsman and three whips, easily distinguished from the field by their scarlet frocks and round caps, in addition to the master, no less a personage than the far-famed Squire Osbaldiston, who hunted them in person, and now sat a little way aloof, clad like his men, and mounted on nothing less than the far-famed and almost immortal Clasher, who probably, in his day, was the best hunter *par excellence* of all that went to hounds in England.

He was surrounded by a group of veterans, easily recognized, even at a distance, by some peculiarities of size, form, or dress, and who turned out to be Lord Alvanley, conspicuous then for his jack-boots *a la* Horse-guards, at that time worn by him alone in England; Valentine Magher, the king of the heavy weights; Campbell of Saddell, the best son of the Gael, Kintore not excepted, that ever crammed a

thorough-bred at an impracticable fence; Sir Harry Goodriche and Sir Richard Musgrave, crack riders, and good sportsmen both, *arcades ambo*, both true Yorkshire tykes; Jem Baird, longer of limb than Longshank was of old; George Payne; and Bellamy, characteristically employed in fighting with a horse, which seemed to be almost as wicked and ill-tempered as himself; and half a dozen others of less note in the general sporting world, although well known at Melton, and thence to the broad waters of the brimming Trent.

In the foreground of the animated picture at least a hundred grooms were leading to and fro as many noble hunters in their body-clothes, awaiting the arrival of their masters, who as they dropped in one by one —and they might be seen on all sides, skurrying in across the country, like so many shooting-stars, all concentrating toward a common nucleus—doffed overcoats, and Macintoshes, and mud boots, and turned out as spick and span as if for a huntball, mounted their horses, glittering as if their skins were of shot satin or highly burnished metal, and formed little groups, the coffee-house of the hunting-field; wherein, as the ladies are wont to insist, more scandal is talked, and more characters are ruined, than in the most gossiping cotery of antiquated spinsters that ever congregated round a village fire to stimulate their acerbities with cogniac and lubricate their excess with hyson. Be that, however, as it may, it was a brilliant and soul-stirring spectacle, if regarded as a spectacle alone, the rather that in addition to all that has been described there were six or eight phaetons, pony-curricles, and barouches, filled with the fairest of the fair, pre-eminent among whom were the magnificent daughters of the ducal house of Rutland, each surrounded by a chosen knot of adorers, as it would seem, beyond measure, by the "becks and nods and wreathed

smiles," of the delighted delicate beings who disdained not to be observers of the rude sports, and witnesses of the pluck and peril of their admirers.

By this time Matuschevitz and the Virginian had betaken themselves to their hunters, after looking duly and warily to the length of stirrup-leathers, the strength and tightness of girths, and all those nice minutiæ which may not be neglected save at severest risk of a fall; a thing never desirable, and no where less so than at Melton, where it is, unless a fortunate check intervene seasonably, almost synonymous with the loss of a place in the run; and the count being well horsed on a fine brown hunter by Lottery, while Fairfax bestrode "Moonbeam" with his Tiger upon "Thunderbolt," the nigh of kin to Valentine Magher's famous Slasher, they had no reason to fear their inability, *cæteris paribus*, to go in the first flight, and live as long as their neighbors.

"The first words that the Russian spoke, were, "Just in the right time, by Jove! Osbaldiston looking at his watch. Yes! now he nods to Jack Stevens—they'll be in covert in five minutes or less. Come along Fairfax!"

Then as the other followed him easily, but promptly, toward the hounds, he turned in his saddle to his friend, and said laughingly, "Ah, ha! you'll have to win your laurels before you wear them to-day, my gallant colonel, for yonder I see Valentine is mounted on the very horse they were talking about in our stables yesterday. There he goes—that's Slasher—and neither he nor his master are very easy to beat, I can tell you."

"He is very heavy to look at it, whatever he may be to go," answered the Virginian.

"Don't plume yourself too much on your weight, I'd advise you. It is a common saying here that the feather-weights take more out of their horses by rash

riding than makes up the difference between themselves and the welters. Ah, how do Goodricke? Holyoke, how are you? Fine scenting morning, I fancy. Let me name Colonel Fairfax, Sir Harry Goodricke, Sir Francis Holyoke."

And they all rode on together, chatting about any thing rather than the business of the hour. Jardinier's absurd riding and heavy fall not being forgotten.

"How like him," said Holyoke. "Well, if he get here in time, I would not be his horse for something; whenever he gets a fall before we find he rides as if he were possessed by the very fiend incarnate."

"This way," said Goodricke, turning his horse's head abruptly to the right, as they entered the field immediately adjoining the gorse-covert, while Osbaldiston and the hounds, which were a hundred yards or so ahead, diverged a little in the opposite direction.

"This way. They'll cast them in at the south-west corner, and draw this way."

"All right," said Matuschevitz, nodding to him. "We'll join you in five minutes; but I fancy my friend here would like to see them draw—we'll go along with the hounds, Fairfax."

"Very well," said Goodricke, laughing, "but you'll have to make up for it by and bye, I can tell you; for he's sure to go away down wind this morning, the more so that the wind and the hill are together."

The hunting plenipotentiary nodded again, and rode away after the Squire, while Fairfax observed that full nine-tenths of the sportsmen did the same, though a few, and those the men who had been pointed out to him as the *best* men, first loitered behind in groups, and then sauntered slowly along in the direction taken by Goodricke and his friends.

At the extreme southern angle of the gorse-covert, which was a long hanger, bounded on the upper side by a ditch and plashed hedge, on the further side, run-

ning along the crest of the hill, and sloped gently downward for the breadth of perhaps two hundred yards, while it must have been at least a thousand in length, Osbaldiston paused, and drawing in his bridle, sat for a few moments perfectly quiescent in the middle of his hounds, while the field diverged a little in all directions, according to their ideas of the chances of a start.

The hounds, all perfectly aware that the decisive moment had arrived, stood gazing with full, eager eyes, heads erect, and waving sterns, toward the desired covert; but so perfectly were they disciplined to obey, that not one stirred or attempted to move on, nor did a single whimper denote their intense eagerness. In a moment, casting his eyes right and left to the second and third whips, who instantly took their cue, and rode off toward the two lower angles of the gorse, Osbaldiston waved his hand forward with the shrill cry—

"Eleu! Eleu in! Eleu! in, good lasses!"

And without one impatient cry, twenty abreast, the beauties dashed at the ditch and fence, as if by a single impulse and a single motion. It seemed to Fairfax that the hedge crashed but once, as their lythe, sleek, many-spotted bodies were seen for one instant writhing upon the top as they struggled over it, and were then lost among the dark green prickly foliage, if foliage it can be called, of the dense furze. Without another word, the Squire gave the rein to Clasher, and pressing his knees gently to his side, but giving him no spur, the good horse made three easy strides in advance, cleared the bank and plashed hedge, as if it had been nothing, and landed over the steep drop beyond, as steadily as a troop-horse performs some ordinary evolution. Jack Stevens and the other whip followed, and with now and then a word of encouragement, and now and then a gentle rate, that proceeded

to draw for the first fox, the far-famed gorse of Uckleby.

Meanwhile, the bulk of the field had moved onward, taking the fence to the south of the gorse, and were riding slowly down hill along its western border; but so soon as the hounds were in covert, Fairfax and the Russian trotted gently forward, and soon joined the group of veterans, who waited coolly and collectedly at the northern corner, above the fence on the ridge, assured by the sportsman's instinct that if the gorse held a fox—and when did Uckleby not hold one—he would go away somewhere near the north-eastern corner, at which stood or rather sat, one of the whips, still as a carved statue on his horse, which was equally motionless, and which gave no token, save in the erected ears and the occasional quivering of the whole frame, how deeply it felt the excitement.

Before them stretched away a long, long slope, so gentle that it seemed almost a plain, divided by huge bull-finches, and occasional barriers of heavy timber, into pastures of fifty and sixty acres in extent, without an acre of plough-land or fallow in sight, till, at about five miles distance, the occasional gleam of blue water, and the long line of pollard willows told the presence of a large brook, while several smaller streams were indicated midway by fringes of alder, and an ozier bed or two. Beyond the brook there was another long gentle acclivity, headed far, far away to the southward by the majestic woods and turreted heights of Belvoir; and surging up, nearly north-east of the point at which they stood, into a gentle knoll, crested by a small patch of high wood-land and a long stunted covert, apparently distant from the gorse they were drawing by some nine or ten miles.

"I am glad you have come," said Beaufort, who had joined the veterans. "This, Colonel Fairfax, is the finest bit of country in all Leicestershire—that is

the Whissendine which you see glittering in the bottom, and he is bank full after these rains; that covert on the hill is Billesdon Coplow, and if we have any luck, with the wind as it is, that will be his point to-day."

"Hist! Beaufort!"

"A challenge, by all that's holy!"

The faint whimper of a hound came up the wind, a sharp, shrill, treble challenge, and then Osbaldiston's scream—"Have at him—Ha-ark to Charity! Have at him!"

"Charity, hey?" said Magher. "All's right, then, for a thousand."

An instant of breathless silence, again Charity's shrill voice, and then another, and another, and another—

"Ha-ark! Ha-ark—to Vengeance! Hark to Bluebell!"

Now, now it is one crash of terrible, discordant, furious music—and now one more scream of the Squire, "Hark together!"

"A sure find—and they are coming to us," said Goodricke.

Magher gathered up his reins, and moving a little to the left, sat ready facing the fence. Holyoke pulled off his gloves, and Alvanley pulled up his boots.

The whipper-in at the corner below them, pulled off his cap, and lifted it high in air. "He has broke by him!" cried Dick Musgrave. "Not a word, boys, or we'll have him back."

"Tallyho! whoop! Tallyho!" burst from the lips of the whipper-in; and the next moment pug was seen going straight away across the grass-field in a right line for the Coplow, having broken about a hundred yards to the south of the corner, where the whipper-in was waiting, and perhaps three hundred from the

group, who were watching at the upper angle, in a right line above him.

Osbaldiston's yell, "Gone-away! whoop—go-one-a-wa-ay!" might have been heard a league, three quick *toots* of the horn followed, and the gorse was alive with the rush and rivalry of the fierce ladypack, and rang merrily but wildly to their furious chiding.

"Plenty of time, gentlemen," said the whip, raising his hand with a gentle caution, as one or two of the youngsters leaped the hedge impetuous.

"Hold hard! hold hard! for Heaven's sake!" shouted Musgrave. "You can't catch him with your mouths. Hold hard!"

"Heaven knows there's time enough for all!" cried Goodricke.

"And what's more, a fair field and no favor," said Valentine Magher, as cool as a cucumber.

As they stood on the crest of the ridge, the same fence which the men had taken as they threw off, lay before them, a deep ditch of perhaps twelve feet, with high bank and a plashed hedge on the other side, and a nasty drop over it; then came a narrow strip of upland pasture with a second hedge, a tremendous ox-fence of old thorn, with a double ditch and a rail on each side of it; being a continuation of the lower boundary of the gorse. In this, however, there was a gate close to the angle of the gorse, which the whipper-in was holding open. Above the upper fence about thirty horsemen were collected, Fairfax being the farthest from the crest on the extreme right; Cecil Forrester and Aleck McDonald had jumped the first fence, but ashamed of their impetuosity, stood rebuked and motionless.

Another crash, nearer and now close at hand, of shrill dog-music, and then twelve abreast, the leading hounds topped the edge of the gorse, the tail hounds

came tumbling each over each, across it, and away, on a breast-high scent, over the open.

"Now go it!" shouted Magher; and at the word, almost in a line, thirty horses shot over the drop-leap. Fairfax had cleared it cleverly; a score at least of the others were rushing blindly toward the gate; ten or a dozen only of the old ones had taken their own line; Fairfax *remembered*. Holding the brave horse hard by the head, and gripping him, monkey-like, from crotch to ankle-joint, he rushed him at the great leap, giving him the spur sharply as he rode to it.

For an instant the sensation was that of being enthroned on the back of a soaring bird, so easy was the long swinging stride; then came the crash of the topmost branches of the tall bullfinch, as he was borne violently through them; and then, firm as a rock, the good steed alighted well in the next field, with an unshaken rider on his back, and went away without stop or stagger at a long slashing gallop.

So Percy Fairfax saw the finding of his First Fox

CHAPTER VI.

A SHARP BURST AND A HARD RUN.

The first sound that met Fairfax's ear, as he landed well over the fence into the second field, was a wild cry, half curse and half cheer; and a loud crash instantly succeeded it, as yet another rider plunged through the abattis of branches offered by the bullfinch, and spurring up savagely alongside half checked a fine black Smolensko horse, equal to double his weight, a few yards ahead of "Moonbeam." It was Lord Jardinier, who, by aid of the lift he got in his friend's phæton, had come up to the ground just in time to hear Osbaldiston's scream, as "pug" was viewed away, had sprung to his hunter's back, and seeing of whom the group at the northern end of the gorse covert consisted, had made up his mind on the instant what was the thing to be done, and by dint of desperate riding had done it, so as just to make up for lost way and no more.

The hounds were going heads up and sterns down, never stooping for an instant to the tainted grass, but taking the scent as it reeked up on the air hot from the traces of the recent quarry, racing as it were in eager emulation each against the other, and running all so well together, with twelve or fourteen nearly abreast in the front rank, that it seemed as if a well-spread table-cloth might easily have covered them.

The Squire and Jack Stevens, who had come full tilt through the gorse close at the tail of the leading hounds, had leaped into the field almost abreast of them, and were now bowling away a few yards more or

less to the left of the pack, which were bearing slightly to the left, while Magher, Beaufort, Campbell, Goodricke, Holyoke, and Alvanley, lay close at the right hand of the tail hounds, though a few yards astern of them. Matuschevitz and Fairfax lay yet further to the right, but the latter was almost abreast of the leading hounds, having kept his line quite straight, instead of bearing to the southward, by which he had gained something in headway, though he had increased his distance from the pack. At this moment Jardinier came next yet farther to the right, standing up in his stirrups, and pointing forward with his hunting-whip toward the next fence, as if to challenge Fairfax, to whom, either from jealousy or the mere natural perversity of his temper, he seemed to have taken an instinctive dislike.

Some fifty or sixty yards to the rear of this the first flight, came fifteen or twenty others, who, though many of them capital horsemen and bold riders, had lost time and way through indecision, by riding for the gateway instead of breasting the ox-fence, and it was clear enough that if the scent held and the present pace were to be kept up they would have all they could do to maintain their present ground, without gaining on their leaders.

Half a mile to the left, or the southward, the bulk of the field, who had chosen the western edge of the gorse at the throw off, might be seen to the number of two hundred scarlet jackets, with a sprinkling of green, indicative of Ned Christian and his burly brother yeomen, and a few neat black cut-a-ways, well to the front of these latter—for who ever saw a fox-hunting parson who did not fly the first soar—were seen streaming straight away in a line nearly parallel to the course taken by the fox, though somewhat favored by the southwardly inclination of his line, and hoping

therefore with good show of reason to nick in cleverly at the end of a mile or two.

In spite of Jardinier's half insulting manner and expression, the Virginian was neither himself hurried, nor hurried his good horse, but keeping a steady hand on his snaffle sat firm and *galloped*, not like a provincial, but like one who knew Melton. The field across which they were going was rather wet, without being very deep or heavy, and became more splashy, with a few tufts of rushes interspersed as it neared the headland, where it would seem there was a drain on this side the fence, which was a tall, newly plashed, stake and bound rasper, full four feet in height at top of a moderate bank, the whole coupled by a recent binding, that no horse which touched it could hope to break and so escape a fall.

All this Fairfax twigged with half an eye, and apprehending that it might be boggy, drew a little further to the left, where a sound, recently mended cart-track, led direct to a stout gate, a few inches lower than the fence, doing the whole so gradually and so quietly that his horse never lost his stride, nor fell at all to the rear.

"Aha!" said Dick Musgrave, who rode close behind him, as he saw the manœuvre, "Yankee or no Yankee, that chap knows what he is about."

The next moment they were at the fence, with his hands down, his heels dropped, no touch of the spur or flourish of the whip, the Virginian popped his horse over the difficult gate, as if he had been doing it all his life, neither slackening his pace nor increasing it the least. Jardinier, who had gone a little too fast at the plashed hedge, felt the ground shiver under him, when he was within three strides of taking off—a less daring and sagacious rider would have tried to get him in hand too late, checked his horse, made him flounder, and as likely as not brought him, chest on,

upon the binding. But the viscount was too knowing; and probably his impetuous and obstinate mood would not have suffered him in any event to pull up. As it was, he did what was unquestionably for the best, kept him held hard but spurred him right onward through the deep, and by a vigorous and well-timed lift carried the Smolensko clear over the hedge, though his heels tipped it, as he landed safely.

Still he had taken something, if it were but a little, out of his horse, and as much Fairfax had saved, and two or three of the old hands nodded their approbation.

The whole of the first flight got over safely, but two or three crashes in the rear, and a stray horse or two coming up riderless, with flowing reins and flying stirrups, showed that the field was already thinning rapidly. The next field was one of the worst in Leicestershire to gallop over cleverly—an old piece of grass, which would have been wet had it not been laid down in very deep furrows, almost as deep as grips, and steep, high-backed ridges, dotted and broken up by mole-hills. Instinct led Fairfax, for certainly he had never seen, much less ridden across a field in the least degree like that before, to lay his horse a little diagonally across the furrows, and he of course did so to the left, bringing him still closer to the line of the leading hound, and as he raised his eyes he observed that the others had done the like, and so felt that he had done well. His horse, too, a great advantage, evidently was a made hunter, and knew thoroughly what he was about, being previously accustomed to such ground, so that he got along very well, skimming over the furrows in his stride, and alighting stout and steady on the crown of every ridge. His good fortune, of which in this instance he was not unaware, for he perceived himself deficient in the peculiar qualities of hand and horsemanship which would

have enabled him, as he saw at once it would Magher, Goodricke, and Saddell, and even Jardinier, to compel a raw horse so to measure his stroke, lent him courage and confidence; and, finding how strongly and solidly his horse strode under him, when not one or two, but many, of the others were laboring heavily, he ventured to make play a little, and without putting him to his full speed, shook him a length or two ahead, and took the next fence foremost of the field at a fly. It was a very nasty one, a tall, ragged oak paling, leaning toward him from the top of a bank two or three feet high, with a broad drain on the hither side, and what he neither saw nor suspected, a little ditch or grip about two feet wide and a foot deep, at some yards distant from the paling on the other side. This sort of arrangement, seeming, as it does, to be intended precisely for the purpose of catching the forefeet of any horse leaping the fence in that direction at full swing, is termed a *squire-trap*, and is perhaps more dreaded by the fox-hunter than any other modification of ditch, rail, and bank, that he is in the habit of encountering. This place, lying in so famous a piece of country as it did, between the two most crack coverts in the hunt, was of course well known to every one who had hunted Leicestershire even a single season, and it was always taken warily and with the utmost exercise both of hand and judgment, so that in the very point of time when Fairfax charged it, quite too quickly for that style of leap, the oldsters were screwing themselves well down into their pigskins, and the youngsters were, to say the truth, some of them shaking in their stirrups. All presaged, as they saw him shoot ahead, a certain fall to the bold stranger; Jardinier grinned a malicious smile of triumph, and Matuschevitz, who was almost as anxious for his protege's success as for his own place in the run, would have shouted

a warning, but that he feared to disturb him rather than put him on his guard.

But friend and foe were both destined to be disappointed, for the brave horse "Moonbeam," whether it was that he knew what was to be done better than his rider, or what is more probable, that he baulked for the tenth part of a second at the unexpected sight of bright water, checked himself instinctively at the drain's brink, and took the upstanding pales by what is called a buck leap, barely clearing them, and doing so only by bringing his hind legs quite close under him up almost to his belly, and then by a sudden twist alighting on them. That is a very common trick of leaping with Irish hunters accustomed to perpendicular stone walls with no ditches, but is unusual with English horses, and not in them considered an advantage, since in most of the midland and many of the northern counties the hedges are backed by broad drains or brooks, into which a buck leap is sure to precipitate both horse and rider, neck and crop. It is, moreover, a very hard leap to sit, and shakes an unpractised rider more than any other. At this crisis, however, it stood our friend in good stead, for used to timber jumping, most of any, he sat it firmly, and the good horse seeing the trap at a glance, barely tipped the bank with his heels, stretched over the second grip without an effort, and was galloping, the next instant, at his ease across the best and soundest piece of green sward they had yet traversed.

Meanwhile the man-trap had done its work as usual, for no precautions of management or lifting can be certain to avail even with the best riders, especially where, as in this instance, the first leap is of great magnitude. Fairfax would have given much to look round and see how his followers fared, for he was now well nigh three lengths ahead, but he knew it would not be courteous, so he galloped right forward, if any

thing pulling upon his horse a little, on the sound land, with his eye riveted on Charity, the leading hound of the pack up to this moment.

Osbaldiston on the unrivaled Clasher, whom he swung at it hard held, with a dig of the persuaders, a cut of his whip across the haunches and a scream, cleared the whole at a stride, drain, palings, bank and man-trap, covering nine-and-twenty feet in length from toe to heel prints. Magher purposely achieved what Fairfax had by luck accomplished, Jack Stevens followed suit, so Holyoke and Matuschevitz, but Goodricke, whose weight had told severely on his horse in the bad ground, and Jardinier, who was watching the Virginian instead of minding his own business, literally put their feet into it—in the ditch of course, and rolled over and over it. The former with his welter weight getting such a squelch as stunned both his horse and himself for a moment or two, the latter with genuine and characteristic pluck holding on to his reins like grim death, and being again in his saddle and under way within a minute after his downfall. The others fared as they might, some baulked it altogether, some got over safely, some were nabbed in the squire trap, one unfortunate chested the palings with a blown horse, and went backward into the train, and thence home, with a lamed horse, a wet jacket, and a sprained ankle ; but, save with the first flight, we have nothing to say.

Up to this moment the line of the run had lain considerably to the left, or south-westward, of the point whence the fox had broken, and the leading hounds were looking up a full mile to the south-west of Billesdon Coplow, the point for which every one had supposed he must be making, so that every thing up to this time had favored the party who, taking the western instead of the eastern end of Uckleby Gorse, would so have been to a certainty thrown out had the

hounds gone straight away due south from the gorse. Had they kept on six fields farther as they were going they would have crossed the line of these skirters, and so placed them on an equality with the eight or ten men who had ridden from the beginning side by side with the pack. They had not, however, gone above half way across the good sound pasture-field, in which they were now running, before the leading bitch threw up her head for a second, cast herself beautifully to the right, and without checking carried the scent right off on an opposite tangent to the eastward, right across the head of the Virginian's horse. He pulled up on the instant, and though it was but for half a minute, no one but he who has ridden long to fox-hounds knows how vast is the relief given to a horse, which has been going twenty minutes at three-quarters speed, by a dead stop even for ten seconds.

Away they went, as hard as they could lay legs to the ground, now in a direct line for the Coplow, running so fast that they literally were unable to give tongue, and that only a solitary yelp or whimper from time to time showed that they would have spoken to the trail if they had had the breath to do so.

This turn, of course, favored Fairfax, who had been riding from the start to the right of the pack, and who was now, of course, riding the inner circle, while all the old Meltonians, who had been previously a horse's length or two behind him, were now thrown a length or two farther behind, and left with the option of riding the outer circumference, or checking their horse's stride and crossing behind the Virginian, so as to get the inside of him. This was a point of judgment, and one did one thing, one another; but there was one person to whom that sudden turn was victory, or the chance of it—that person was Jardinier, the last of the whole squad since his fall, and far the outermost to the right, now made the innermost, and

enabled, by laying up direct for the leading hound, to ride the chord of an arc, and to bring himself once more fairly abreast of our hero. He had still, however, this disadvantage, that whereas his rival, having been from the first well up to the hounds, had been able to take the profit of every variation of pace—for it must not be supposed that hounds, even when running at their best speed across a country, always go at their very fastest, for scent will differ with soils, and so pace likewise—he had been able to pull up his horse once or twice, and once to give him a fair stand-still with his nose to the wind for a few seconds, while Jardinier being all the time a little, though but a very little, way behind, and striving to make up lee-way, had never an opportunity of easing or sparing his fine black hunter for a single yard. On the other hand he had the advantage in weight considerably, in perfect knowledge of the ground, and in being a thorough practised and old fox-hunter, though but a young man, against a comparative tyro. Away! away went the lady pack, as if they had been winged; wo to the fox whose ill fate had set him before them on that sporting morning. Of all the skirting squad, late so hopeful of nicking in, their fate was sealed forever, should the fox hold to his point for the Coplow.

There were but a handful now of the whole field, which must at the break have numbered full three hundred scarlet jackets, within two fences of the hounds. All the rest had come to grief.

First rode, abreast, on parallel lines, literally neck and neck, taking every fence as they found it in their stroke, Jardinier, the crack young one of the country, and Fairfax, already mentally admitted by good judges to be a good one. Close behind these, and all nearly abreast, not following their leaders, but each resolutely riding his own line, came Osbaldiston, Alvanley, Musgrave, the Duke of Beaufort, Holyoke,

and Campbell of Saddell. The weight of Val. Magher, and his hard pounding had told the tale and he was tailing. Goodricke, though riding game, had not yet made his loss good, though he was up with the McDonalds, the Gascoignes, Oliver, Ciss Forrester, and Henry Peyton, who were doing all that could be done to retrieve the time lost at the first gate, and who, though far behind, were still in the same field with the hounds.

On they went, faster, and yet faster—or it seemed that they went faster as the stride of the good horses gradually shortened. Fields flitted by unseen, fences were topped unnoticed, and by this time the Virginian blood of Fairfax, never the coldest in the world, was getting up; and as he saw that the viscount was making a dead set at him, like a true Virginian, he met him half way—and so by this time they had admitted to themselves, what all the field who were within eyeshot had seen the last half hour, that they were riding no less *at* one another than to the hounds.

Together they plunged through a crashing bullfinch, so stout, that had they been going one iota slower, it would have hurled them backward, into a good grass-field of about twenty acres, falling away from them a little, and bounded on the farther side, by the brimming bankfull Whissendine, the broadest *jumpable* brook in England, now slightly overflowed, and running with a furious current.

"Have at you now," cried Jardinier, forgetful in his impetuosity of the laws of conventional courtesy, and he pointed with his whip ahead, then rushed the Smolensko at it. At that very moment Fairfax took a pull on Moonbeam, and dropped two horse's lengths at least astern of Jardinier. The viscount thought his heart had failed him, and that he would blink his pace, and rode yet more fiercely forward. It was his temper not his judgment, that so swayed him; for no man

of all the field knew better that no horse can sweep the Whissendine unless he has the puff well in him.

Till within some ten strides of the red surging river, Fairfax held hard, then set him at it straight, that he could neither stop nor swerve, and in went the persuaders twice; but he knew too well to raise his whip, and with both hands well down, he charged it as if his name had been "Thunderbolt."

The black Smolensko, although half blown, cleared it nobly, but scarce far enough, for the treacherous verge gave way under his hind feet, and he went down, though finding foot-hold in the bank, he recovered, after a heavy lurch, and brought his rider up, clinging to him like a bull-dog, though clean out of the saddle, and upon his withers. "Moonbeam" had not only cleared it as though it had held no water, but landed high and dry with good four feet to spare, and went on steadily without stint or stumble. All the next flight cleared it cleverly; but when the loiterers came up, two or three heavy splashes gave note of wet jackets; and the leaders learned afterward that it was not wholly without risk and difficulty that three or four horses were got out of their cold bath.

On the bank several second horses were waiting for their masters; and to these all eyes were turned wistfully, for the pace had told more or less on all, and at the pace they were going, it was certain that no horse could stand it many minutes longer. But it so chanced that not one of the party in advance had a horse there, not even Jardinier, who wanted his the most. Goodricke's was there, and Magher's, and those of one or two gallants who were nowhere. But of all the first flight, the boys with the second horses had taken the west end of the gorse, where they found, and were now a mile to windward, and no hope of coming up at all.

About fifty yards below the spot where they leaped

the rivulet, a muddy drain falls into it, with an osier patch of about two acres in the angle between the two; this the pack had already passed, when on a sudden they threw up their heads, and were at fault badly. On the instant Fairfax was out of his saddle, in another Moonbeam's nose was well to windward, and half a pint of sherry from his master's flask was down his gullet, and his nostrils sponged out, for the first time, probably, in his life with a cambric handkerchief, redolent of extrait de jockey-club.

"The best thing of the season by all odds," said Sir Richard Musgrave, looking at his watch; "five miles and a half as the crow flies in twenty-three minutes!"

"I wish you joy, Fairfax," cried Beaufort, good-naturedly. "If this is really your first day with fox-hounds, though I can scarce believe it."

"His *first* day!" said Musgrave, laughing. "He has been at it all my life."

"No he only takes to it very kindly;" said Matuschevitz, laughing; "as I was sure he would to any thing, when I saw him stick a pig that every body else was afraid of, in a *chasse aux sangliers* near Rennes."

"No, but you don't mean that it is really your first day, Colonel Fairfax;" said Dick Musgrave; "for if you do, this is a—a—I don't know what."

"A d—d *thing*," said Jardinier, who had just come up with his horse limping, and himself dripping; "a d—d thing, ain't it, to be done this way?"

"It is really my first day in England," said Fairfax, quietly.

"In England!—why where do they hunt foxes else? In England, quoth'a!" said Holyoke, laughing.

"In Virginia, a little; though not in such style, certainly, nor across such a country," he replied.

"Virginia! Where the deuce is that?" asked Jar-

dinier, half recurring to his first idea that he had been riding against a Hottentot.

"Somewhere in Southern Africa, I believe, near the Cape," answered Beaufort, gravely. "But what the deuce are the hounds about. It is a curious at-fault this."

Osbaldiston had made by this time a short cast forward in the line of the Coplow, but not hitting it off, was coming back at full trot, with the ladies at his heels.

"Overrun it, I fancy," he squealed, as he passed them, "and laid up in the osier holt. Eleu-in! Eleu-in there, good lasses!"

And in an instant the osier holt was crashing as the high-strung pack dashed into it, and the next moment made ring with a full-mouthed chorus.

"Have at him there! Hark a-wa-ay!" and a "whoop" of a countryman at the other end followed, and all who had dismounted sprang back into their saddles.

"Exactly three minutes to a second," said Musgrave, as he put up his watch; "but it's a cursed bore his running back to those out-siders."

But even as he spoke, Jack Stevens' rate was heard from the other end, "Hark back! Hark back, I tell you Charity! Get away, Bedlam Bess! Ha-rk back!" followed by the sharp reports of his heavy whip; and at the next instant, black with sweat, tongue out, and brush down, the hunted fox dodged out under their very horses' feet, and skurrying through them unhurt, went away on his old line as good as new.

"Whoop! gone-away, whoop!" shrieked the Squire; and at that well known yell, "the ladies" came streaming up and away again, breast-high for the Coplow.

"A fresh fox went away back, sir," said Jack Stevens, "and the place was so foiled with the ould devil,

I don't wonder, if Charity did take it. They 're settling on him now, sir ;" and he touched his cap.

"Now for his brush," squealed the Squire; "he'll scarce reach the Coplow."

And away they went for four miles farther; and now up hill, all with a fair start; all with horses that had been well tried, wind and limb, that morning, all emulous and abreast.

It boots not to dwell on fences; for, after all, except as you ride at them, they are all pretty much alike. There were no checks any more, nor falls, until at the very last fence, when "Moonbeam" chested a high stake and bound-fence, and came on his knees and nose, to be cleverly recovered by his rider, just as the Squire's incomparable and indescribable scream, "Who-whoop! who-whoop! who-whoop! was heard from Billesdon Coplow on the hill—within three fields of which they killed him, fairly run into in the open—all the way back down wind to the Whissendine, where it met the ears of the stragglers, and told them that the best fox was dead who had run that year before the ladies.

Point to point, from the find to the kill, it was nine miles and a quarter as the crow flies; and there was about half a mile to add—so nearly straight was the gallant fox's line—for the one deviation he had made in the true course.

In forty-four minutes it was done, the check included, over difficult ground, and some of the hardest fencing in England. The greatest speed ever held for an hour, is twelve miles, and that across common land without fences; so that it is no wonder if that burst be remembered and quoted as one of the best and hardest ever known; and if that fox's scalp be visible to this day, as it is, marked with three crosses as super-excellent, on the doors of the Quorndon kennels.

From that day forth Percy Fairfax was free of Mel-

ton Mowbray; and it was quite useless that he affirmed and asseverated that it was his first day with the hounds in England. So he gave up saying so.

And Jardinier swears to this day that it is all nonsense about Fairfax being a Virginian, because every one knows the Fairfaxes are a Yorkshire family; besides, he knows that the people are all black in that country; and as to their fox-hunting at the Cape, or in South Africa, he is not quite such a fool as not to know that it's too hot to hunt there; and besides, there are no foxes there, only jackals; for didn't poor Power tell him so; and hadn't he been there himself —Power, not Jardinier—and so mustn't he know.

CHAPTER VII.

A BALL ROOM, AND A BELLE.

The fox was hardly pulled to pieces, before up came, in a long weary string, the boys on the second horses; but, instead of having ridden, as they ought to have done if skilful and fortune-favored, the chord of an arc or the hypothenuse of a triangle, they had unfortunately on that day been thrown, by the singular straightness of the fox's line, and the more remarkable singularity of his one short angle, entirely on the outside of the circle, and being thus forced to make up leeway, instead of nicking in, and taking it easy, they proved the truth of Matuschevitz's remark, about the small advantage, if not disadvantage, possessed by light weights over welter weights in a sharp burst. For as they came streaming in over the upland, a long straggling, panting line, it quickly became evident to the chiefs of the hunt that the feather-weight youngsters had taken more out of the second horses, than had the welters out of the first, which had borne all the brunt and burthen of the day. Osbaldiston gave a low whistle, as a grand black horse by Jerry, came up white with foam, and showing red clay marks of a heavy fall—Jardinier swore hideously as bruising Jem, his pet tiger, brought in a bright chesnut Comus colt, staggering and dead-blown—Fairfax, also, saw Thunderbolt, half-brother to Slasher, kicked up the upland, with bellows to mend plainly written in his distended nostrils, heaving flanks, and blood-shot eyes, and evidently more distressed than either his half-brother, Slasher, who had done miracles under the

bruising pluck of Magher, or Clasher, who from first to last had flown in the first flight under the dauntless daring and grand piloting of *the Squire*. In a word, Alvanley, Goodricke, Holyoke, Sir Richard Musgrave, all the cracks, were nonplussed; and what was worse, the second horses of the men were worse beat, if possible, than those of their masters; and it was clear to be seen that the death of that rattling fox was the end of the day's sport, although the sun had not yet seen his meridian.

The run had been so brilliant, however, that all who had gone well were well contented: and it was only Jardinier, ever malcontent, and a few others of the illustrious thrown out, who were disposed to cavil at the dispositions of the Squire.

"I can't say, Fairfax, that I'm sorry it's all over for the day," said Matuschevitz, "and you for reasons of your own ought to be glad, if you are prudent, I mean, more than ambitious—which by the way I don't believe you are."

"I'm sure, at least, I never said I was, *mon cher*," rejoined the other, laughing, "but why? why *ought I* to be glad?"

"Is that ignorance or affectation, Fairfax? stupidity or vanity?—of the two whether?"

"Vanity and affectation, I trust. But, again, I repeat why?"

"You have gone so devilish well to-day, and made so favorable an impression that you would do well to repose on your laurels, 'till with renewed morning come reinvigorated sinews."

"Oh! is that all?—but you forget, Matuschevitz, that I ride for excitement and to amuse myself, not to be admired or made a ten-days wonder."

"Oh, aye! the nil admirari, I had forgotten that was your hobby; but I think you misconstrue your Latin admirari; Jardinier will tell you, as an Etonian

—for they do teach Latin there, if they don't teach orthography—means to admire, not *to be* admired; and old Horace almost in the same breath that he recommends the *nil admirari* as the one recipe for real distinction, declares against you when he avows that it is pleasant to be pointed out with the finger, and to have it said of you "that's the fellow!" But the truth is

> You have won of late
> Golden opinions from all sorts of people,
> Which should be worn while new, being in the gloss,
> Not cast aside so soon—

and as my protege and pet-lion, in some sort, I desire to see you maintain yourself with all your blushing honors thick about. But hold!—your pardon—Americans don't blush, I fancy."

"Precious honors truly, to be envied by Jardinier, pronounced almost the equal of Bellamy, and pronounced 'so-so' with a shrug of the aristocratic shoulders of the noble Cheshire."

"'Whatever it is worth while to do at all, it is worth the while to do well.' I think yesterday I heard you pronounce that sentiment almost admirable. Yet now that you have wrested admiration even from the admired, behold! out breaks the lightning gleam of Byronian or Satanic sneer, and the hero of the minute waxes too proud to be proud of his own success. Oh, Virginia! Virginia, is this the philosophy of thy first families!"

"A truce! a truce! no more of that, an thou lov'st me Hall, and I will cry *Peccavi!* but upon my soul this exceeding desire for the approbation of fox-hunting *Lords*, appears to a poor republican, such as I, somewhat contemptible."

"Not that they are English Lords, but that they are English Fox-hunters, that is to say *the* fox-hunters of the world *par excellence*. But let us see most doughty

compatriot of Washington, most philosophic fellow-citizen of Franklin, whether thy noble democratic ardor, and fine contempt of aristocratic admiration, will lead you to indifference as intact and superb toward the admiration of the fox-hunting ladies, as of their fox-hunting lords. That will be proved, Colonel, this very evening. Look that you tarnish not your new won laurels."

"This evening—how? what do you mean, count?" cried Fairfax, with his eyes sparkling and a deeper hue coloring his nut-brown cheek—for he fancied himself smitten with one of the fair sister goddesses of yester-even, to whom he supposed Matuschevitz to allude, though he did not exactly know whether it was the volatile and bright brunette of Cheshire or the voluptuous, soft, blonde Isabella A*.

"Did you not know that there's a Hunt-Ball to-night? *The* Hunt-Ball. Every thing worth seeing within a hundred miles round Belvoir will be there! Look to yourself once more. Jardinier boasts, if you did beat him at the Whissendine, he can beat you at a *gallope*. There will be one *girl* in the rooms, he'll bet a poney, won't dance a war-dance with any Indian, whatever the men may say of it!"

"Name! name!" cried Fairfax, laughing, "name your girl, and I'll stake the poney. *Name*, your girl, as they say in the house, Count, or never more be friend of mine."

"I never break faith," replied the Count gravely, "even with Jardinier. I will only tell you that she has the prettiest name of any girl in the room, when you find it out."

"Confound her name, one don't flirt with names, much less fall in love with them. Has she the prettiest face, the prettiest person in the room? Is her hair as fine, her eyes as bright as Lady Cheshire's? Her arms as round, her shoulders as dimpled her

bust as exquisite as Isabella A * l? If so, my lord Jardinier, have at you!"

"You must find out, Colonel; you must find out, for after all it's all opinion, you know. Skin-deep! Skin-deep! what have politicians like you and I to do with waists, and busts, and beauty?"

"Talleyrand was a politician, Count, and Lieven is an ambassador, and Marie Esterhazy an ambassadress."

"True, most republican," cried Matuschevitz, but before he could proceed farther a shout came from behind, as they cantered along a green lane leading to the high road, heard clear above the clatter of the galloping hoofs; and the next moment the fine, portly person of the Duke of Beaufort reined up beside them.

"What ho! Count—what ho! Colonel Fairfax, excuse ceremony, pray, and dine with me *en garcon*. We shall not sit late, but be good boys, for we must be at the Hunt ball. You go, of course, Colonel Fairfax—of course they have sent you a card. Every body will be there—that is to say, every body of the three hundred people whom every body calls every body."

"Thanks, Duke, I shall be very happy. I never heard of the ball 'till Matuschevitz named it just now. But I think I should like to go, that is to say, if they have sent me a card."

"There is no if about that," said the duke. "If any one had known you were coming, before you made your appearance, from Caffraria or the moon, as some of these hereditary geniuses seem to suppose, you would have found your table covered with such things. As it is I know it was spoken of last night."

"And I know it was sent this morning," rejoined the Russian, "for it came under cover to me before breakfast; but I did not say a word about it to him,

for, although I well knew that my Hyperborean blood could endure the prospect of the blaze of beauty to which it will be exposed to-night, I feared lest the southern temperament of this ardent son of Virginia would be inflamed beyond all hope of his 'witching the world with noble horsemanship.'"

"Which he certainly has done, or ought to have done to-day," said the Duke, with a smile and a half apologetical bow to Fairfax, and then added, "you must pardon me for seeming to flatter you to your face, but frankly you have gone to-day as no provincial, much more no foreigner has ever gone before you; all our best and oldest sportsmen admit *that;* and Jardinier, sweet youth, is well prepared to cut his own throat at thought of your victory."

"How fatal a victory, if it should deprive England of so bright an ornament to the peerage."

"And Bellamy would undoubtedly have been as well prepared to cut yours, if he and his good-natured horse had not got themselves pounded so early in the run, that it was not you, but Bellamy, who beat Bellamy," said Matuschevitz, for all the world were in the habit of talking openly about these worthies.

"Pleasant fellows, very!" said Fairfax, drily.

"Very pleasant, colonel," said the Duke, "but pardon me for saying to you as a stranger, that we make it a point to take no notice whatever of their rudeness—which never becomes impertinence at least with their equals or superiors, but is limited to brusque coarseness, or dogged ill-temper—except by silent contempt, a sharp epigram, or a quick jest at their expense. This puts them so utterly wrong that they dare not quarrel, turns the laugh against them, and increases their mulish sullenness. For let me say to you, and do not think I am presuming to lecture you, that what is considered the worst thing against a man in England, except refusing to fight, is fighting a duel.

Public opinion of men of his own caste arranges the things here for a man, which in France, or with you I presume, would be settled by the small-sword, or the rifle."

"I am very much obliged to you, Duke, and, so far from fancying that you are lecturing me, know that the greatest favor a gentleman in your position can confer upon a stranger in his own country is to make him *au fait*, to those small usages of society, to which no foreigner can be up, on his first arrival."

"I certainly should not have said as much to every one."

"And I certainly must say that Lord Jardinier was to-day unpardonably rude to me, not only as a foreigner but as a personal stranger."

"He was, indeed, and he will be told so at a proper time, from a quarter whence he will regard what he is told. I was afraid only that you would have condescended to resent it, to do which, I assure you, would have been a descent."

"My dear duke," replied Fairfax, earnestly and gratefully, "if you will permit me so to call you, I am not, though I hope a thorough American, one of those propagandizing, make-mischiefs, and marplots, who pass their whole time while abroad in a lively attempt to render themselves as detestable and their country as ridiculous as possible, by endeavoring to force their own manners, I should say want of manners, down the throats of all and sundry. I am quite content when in Rome to be as Romans are, and to try to conduct myself in every country, as I see the best bred men of that country conduct themselves. For this, I have no doubt, I shall be denounced at home, if they ever learn it, by all the stump orators of the great unterrified from Maine to Mississippi, as a soulless southern aristocrat, and as a fawning flatterer of European monarchists. But I don't think

that will deter me much from any course I judge it good to follow."

"I do not think it will, colonel," said the duke, with a quiet smile, "and if you stand the artillery of our ladies' eyes, as coolly as you do the puppyism of our scape-graces, and the—what shall I call it, of your sovereign lords and masters the people, I shall set you down as second in *insouciance* only to that far-famed hero in the play, who, when his wife was consumed at table by spontaneous combustion, was disturbed so far only from his equable indifference, as to desire John to 'sweep up his mistress and bring clean glasses.'"

"The new test will be the hardest," said Fairfax, laughing, "if they are all as lovely as two we saw last evening."

"Not all—oh! no, not all, but plenty," said Beaufort, "and plenty too, more attainable or at least more legitimately so, as not being yet *appropriated* girls, than which Henry R—— says, all married women are nothing else."

"I am afraid," said Matuschevitz, "the *appropriated* will find the colonel more dangerous, than the *unappropriated.* He is not much of a marrying man I've a notion."

"I *guess*, you ought to say, count."

"Luckily for him if it be so. For he'll see one unappropriated to-night who will as certainly gallop into his heart, if it has an open gate or a practicable fence into it, as he would have gallopped into hers if she had been out to-day. Hey, Matuschevitz?"

"Not a word more, duke," cried the plenipo, "not a word more, or he'll be on his guard, on his high horse, and, which is worse than all, on his Virginian high mightiness-ship! Besides, there's a bet about it already!"

"What, the same?" asked Fairfax gaily, "the same, whom I am to detect untaught, the *gare a elle!*

gare a lui! I dare all to the lists, though upon my life, I have not ridden at the ring, since the last tournament I witnessed at the White Sulphur Springs, where I, in the fifteenth year of my precocity, bore away the ring against all comers, all for the love of Sukey Smithson, whom I crowned queen of love and beauty, two days before she eloped with a long, slab-sided Vermont midshipman as green as the mountains that he came from, with a laugh like a horse's neigh, and a voice like an asthmatic bag-pipe. After that my lacerated heart became hard as the nether mill-stone, and I defy—"

"Don't be rash, don't be rash. And what is more to the purpose, don't be late for dinner; to-day it is sharp score. This lane takes me to my stables, that to yours. *Au revoir!*"

"Au revoir. *He* is a gentleman, at least," said Fairfax to his friend, as they turned off homeward.

"One of ten thousand, Fairfax," said the count, "and what is more to your purpose, he thinks you one. I never saw or heard of his concerning himself so far as to advise any foreigner before, though I have seen him made known to hundreds, myself among the number."

"Advice from him, at all events, is a compliment, and in this case worth having, and what is more taking. And now for some advice from you—since I have letters to write which will keep me busy 'till dinner time—what is the dress *de rigueur*, for a hunt-ball, a thing unknown to us *Caffrarians?* Is there a costume?"

"Yes! for the stewards, and members proper of the club—pinks with white waistcoats, continuations, and silk stockings. For *nous autres* plain evening dresses, *selon moi* the plainer the better, but you must take your choice between the simple and the sublime,

whether to win by sap, or conquer by assault, and who a better judge?"

Two or three hours later the friends met again, and somewhat to the surprise, but yet more to the pleasure of Matuschevitz, Fairfax made his appearance perfectly well dressed, but without any thing of that over elaborate or dressy air which he sometimes adopted much to his detriment, as it must necessarily be to that of all dark-haired and dark-complexioned men. His linen was exquisite, and his white waistcoat sheeny as if it had been varnished, with large oriental pearls, the only *valuable* things he wore; as his well-starched waistcoat, and well-polished shoes were the only *bright* things. For the rest his coat did *not* look the least as if it had been stitched upon his back, and his trowsers *did* look as if they had been made to walk, to dance, or even to sit down in. Certainly he was a very well made, a very handsome, and a very *well*, though not extensively, got up man; and Matuschevitz thought so as he surveyed him, with a slight nod of approbation. But the next minute he nodded more drolly and said, with an arch smile:

"What is this, colonel? I don't see a vast diamond breastpin, worth a cargo of tobacco, in your shirt bosom; and I don't smell patchouli on your handkerchief."

"No, *Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, grace au bon Dieu!* You don't see a New York merchant-prince snob, or a young New York japonicadom snob, before you; but simply a Virginian gentleman."

"Of the first families!" said the Russian with a low inclination, as the French novelists call it, when they want to be excruciating. "Now let's go to dinner." And they went to dinner, and a mighty pleasant dinner it was too, as who ever heard of Beaufort giving a dinner which was not pleasant. Every thing was exquisite, nothing *fine* from the champagne to the

conversation; every thing was of course, and every body from the gentlemen, to the gentlemen's gentlemen, showed that they felt it to be so. Again Fairfax *was* surprised that among a bachelor party of sportsmen not a word of dog or horse talk—among a party of fox-hunters not a word of fox-hunting—among a party of hereditary legislators, not a word of politics was spoken. The only possible allusion to the purpose of their congregation at Melton, discoverable during the evening, was when a very old and very illustrious peer, himself an old master of fox hounds, who sat opposite to him, but to whom he had not been introduced, asked him to drink champagne, and hoped he was well enough satisfied with his first day at Melton.

Fairfax was sorry when the dinner party broke up, so quickly had the hours flown, and so gay and clever withal had been the table talk, with no great guest to monopolize and oratorize, but a dozen skilful players ready to catch up the ball of conversation ere it fell, cast it back each to his neighbor, and maintain an incessant fire of repartee and epigram and persiflage, mixed with much poetry and some few touches of romance, but nothing of enthusiasm or even eagerness.

He was half inclined, before he entered the ball-room, to wish that the ball was at the devil, for taking him away from the dinner party; but before he had been in the room half an hour, he almost wished the dinner party had been at the devil for keeping him so long away from the ball.

The rooms were filling, but not yet full when the party entered with Fairfax in the middle, for he did not think it necessary because he was a republican to prove his republicanism by taking the *pas* of peers of the realm on their own ground.

The first coup d'œil of the rooms did not strike him very much, for there was none at all of the pomp and

false glare and glitter to which he had been used in the United States and on the European Continent. Walls of plain white enamel with the slightest gold moulding, white muslin curtains, plain benches and settees of bamboo around the walls, a profusion of wax lights in cut glass chandeliers, that was all. No ormolu, no marquetry, no velvet, no brocade, no attempts in the furniture at the Middle Ages or the renaissance. But the floor was waxed 'till it was as slippery as ice, the music admirable, for it was flippant, and the assemblage such as no other land can show. But, then, the women—women, mature in youthful beauty, delicate, graceful, and slender of proportion, yet perfect in the rounded symmetry, the soft swelling charms of Hebe's lovely womanhood, with eyes, hair, shapes, unrivalled; different from all other women; from the girls, the exquisite frail sylph-like girls of America, with slender swaying willowy shapelyness of form, and colorless, pearly-white complexions, never alas! or scarcely once in a thousand times, to be developed into the full-blown ripeness of form, or the rich flush of perfect beauty; but to fade away, too soon, and wither ere their prime half-budded—from the irregular features and angular forms of the women of *la belle France*, unequalled in the secrets of carriage and demeanor, in the mysteries of the toilet, in the affectations, coquetries, misauderies, of grace, perfect in all the artificial, but how deficient in the natural beauties of the sex.

And the men, the flower of manly power and masculine grace, easy of bearing, courteous, calm, self-possessed, and most affable to those farthest below, because confident of their own position—admirably dressed, yet perfectly unconscious that they are dressed at all, graceful, because grace of carriage is native to the well-made, well-nurtured, the well-born—dancing and dressing and bearing themselves, in a

word, like gentlemen; that is to say as unlike as possible to New York dandies, or Frenchmen their models, or dancing-masters, the archetypes of both—their tailors and dancing masters being merged in the gentlemen, not the gentlemen lost in the consciousness and concentration of dancing-master, posturer, and tailor.

In such company as that, there is never a blush, a surprise, or even an enthusiasm, much less a flutter at the entrance even of royalty, except on state occasions, and then shown only by a stir and silence. No excitement, therefore, occurred as the Duke's party entered, though it was composed of the very cream of the men of Melton Mowbray, the favorites of the fair, the flower of the peers of England. There is little demonstrativeness in the English character, unless when the heart of England is stirred to its core by some grand emotion.

Therefore the girls went on, just as usual, flirting and chatting and laughing, with that low, soft, intonated voice, that infectious ringing laughter peculiar to themselves, with their partners in the pauses of the dance—the married belles flirted, and talked more earnestly as they sat in corners with their favorites—the *nice* young men philandered, the exquisites sauntered and simpered, the puppies impudently stared and ogled, and the lady-killers made deep, low, earnest love in whispers; and no notice was taken of the new comers beyond a sidelong glance shot from beneath the lashes of some young beauty seeming to say, I wish it were you instead of this dandy simpleton.

Before they had stood, however, five minutes within the door the set of quadrilles ended, and the dancers breaking up into a promenading crowd, left the floor practicable, and our group at once dispersed, each in quest of his peculiar lady.

Fairfax had discovered, immediately on his entrance, the only two lady acquaintances he had made at Melton, the dark-flashing Cheshire, and the sweet languid Isabella at the upper end of the room, and had been discovered in turn, as the slight nod and smiling glance and wafting of the welcoming fan told him; and he was making his way slowly toward them through the highborn throng, who were all by chance streaming in the same direction, when a pair glided sidelong into the string close before him, so that he could only see their backs, who yet rivetted for a moment his attention. The gentleman was young, and much like other young gentlemen, but there was that about the female figure that could not have been overlooked in any crowded mart of beauty.

It was only her back that met the eye of Fairfax, but he was a connoisseur in female charms, and even from that slight glance, he knew that she before him was a perfect woman. A figure considerably above the middle stature, for her classically shaped and exquisitely set on head rose far above her partner's shoulder, could not have been called tall, so perfectly was it proportioned; a long rounded swan-like neck, broad, sloping shoulders, white and firm as Parian marble, with a soft, satin skin, so plump and dimpled that they wooed the touch almost irresistibly; a waist shaped to love's wish, not whaleboned into deformity, as every supple and sinuous motion showed, but capable to fill the arms of an Antinous; a fall of white satin draperies below, so fully flowing in lines so serpentine and suggestive that the perfection of the form and motion they concealed could not be questioned; a mass of silky, glistening braids knotted low down at the nape with a flood of mazy ringlets of half dishevelled hair, of that pale, pale brown which but for its golden radiance would be called flaxen, waving beside each rosy ear quite to the shoulder; a pair of white dimpled

arms shaded only by a lace sleeve of a hands-breadth below the shoulder, with one massive gold bracelet and short white gloves lace-fringed—that was all. Yet it was enough to inspire Percy Fairfax with—what? Aye, what?—Not love, fair and gentle reader, no—certainly not love. But a sensation, half of restless curiosity to see the front and face of that soft and graceful form; half of wonder if the features were in harmony with the harmonious shape and movement; were the eyes deeply, beautifully blue, or was it but a pale, insipid white-eyed and white-eyebrowed blonde, that swam so swan-like, yet so womanly withal, before him? And he half smiled at his own romance, as he caught himself fancying that he had met that woman's figure; for he set her down at once too full blown for a girl; somewhere—was it in his dreams? before, and, yet more absurd that she was in somewise connected with his own fate.

But his ball-room romance was soon and shortly ended. He reached the spot where the sister-graces, of whom he was in quest, stood revealed before him, and ere the fair unknown had turned so far as to show him so much as the outline of a cheek, he halted, in pleasure as in duty bound, slave to those Cynthias of the minute. And the light, merry welcome, and the gentle persiflage half just concealing real praise, hailing him

> "Victor of the day,
> And champion of well-won fray,
> Even as the Lord of Fontenaye,
> And Lutherworth and Scrivelbaye,
> And Tamworth tower, and town—"

and that most fascinating of all flatteries, the mute adulation of a beautiful woman's eyes, long detained him; and the memory of soft dimpled shoulders and pale golden tresses

"In which a ray
Of the enamored sun had lost its way,"

was soon obliterated by the wreathed smiles and eloquent floating glances of the siren Cheshire.

Men came up too, and gathered around the sisters, and all that inimitable grace of frank, natural, unrestrained mirth and merriment, and quip and epigram, unattainable except by the highly cultivated, flashed round him. He was enchanted by the brilliancy of all about him, and, drinking in the inspiration, was not himself the least brilliant of the group.

Suddenly looking up in his face, the dark enchantress over whom he was leaning, dazzled and enchanted, but not touched, said with affected innocence, "but why do you loiter here with us *matrons*, as they call us; why are not you dancing with some of our blue-eyed belles; you ought to swear by blue eyes for the contrast's sake. Do you never dance, Colonel Fairfax?"

"Never, unless it be the war-dance with my tribe, as Lord Jardinier will have it. But I will try, if you will help me."

"I'll help you to do any thing; but I'm mistaken if you are not pretty good at helping yourself, sir."

So she laid her little white gloved-hand on the right shoulder of his black coat, and yielding her waist to his arm stepped forward to join the galloppade, the performers in which were standing just in front of them. And, as they waited for their turn, he was impressing on her mind with earnest words how intensely he admired black eyes and sparkling brunettes, and how insipid he thought all blondes and all blue eyes, when he suddenly lifted his own eyes from the espiegle face beside him; and there close before him, almost in contact with his partner, were the beautiful shoulders, and voluptuous figure, the snow-white neck and golden ringlets of the unknown. She was just moving for-

ward in the first steps of the galloppe—it was that brilliant and favorite one from the *postillion* with the clinking bells and cracking whip, and all the couples were wheeling at their utmost speed—when down came, leading and outstripping all the dance, Jardinier, and merriest, prettiest, and sauciest of spirits, Carry Free, and as they whirled round, the rough-dancing as well as rough-riding, insolent peer came into rude contact with Fairfax's belle unknown, and that so forcibly as to send her reeling back from her partner's support. She slipped on the slippery floor, lost her balance, fell—but, in an instant, almost before she was off her equilibrium, the stout arm of Fairfax had caught her, gently but steadily, round the waist, and set her fairly on her feet, ere one flowing line of her draperies was disordered. It was but a second, but in that second her soft round shoulder had weighed hard on his breast, and those silky, golden ringlets had fanned his face, the fragrance—I know not what it is, certainly not perfume—of highborn beauty had penetrated his very soul.

Perfectly self-possessed, desirous to avoid eclat, and anxious to spare her the embarrassment of having rested but for an instant in a stranger's arms, he recovered his place by his partner's side, and, as she turned to see who had helped her, with thanks on her tongue, intentionally bowed so low as to avoid her eyes, sure more by instinct than by sight, that she half curtsied, and the next moment was whirling away with the brilliant Cheshire at a rate and with an ease that showed him no novice in that graphic dance.

Panting as she was and out of breath, when they paused, his dark enchantress, who had noted all that passed, not unpleased, for she attributed his nonchalance, as she fancied it, to the impression she had made upon him—not that she cared for him the nine-

tieth part of one of her own jet black love-locks, but that she was *femme et coquette jusq'aux ongles*—said, as she leaned on him for support:

"That was beautiful, Colonel Fairfax. Beautifully done—*Foi de Cheshire*, you are a veritable preux chevalier. And such a pretty, self-obliged bow too. You don't know what that bow cost you. The softest blush, and the most grateful glance, and the nicest curtsy from the prettiest girl in England, so the gentlemen call her."

"Is she pretty? I did not see her face at all, and from her figure I did not fancy her a girl—a little *en embonpoint;* is she not?"

"Yes, perhaps so," said Ches, the fault of whose tournure was the reverse of *embonpoint*, "perhaps a little; but she is a girl, quite a girl, not above eighteen, and unappropriated too, as De R—— calls it. Yes, she is very pretty, but I suppose you would not think so, for she is very blonde. Look at her now, she is coming directly toward us."

Turning quietly around, Fairfax saw her, and almost started, so extreme was his surprise and admiration. If the figure were exquisite as seen from behind, what was it in full face, a bust of ideal symmetry such as no nymph or goddess ever wore in the Parian of Praxiteles or Phidias, warm, palpitating, white as snow, tinged with a faint sunset flush, intersected by myriads of small sinuous veins of azure; a waist to be imagined not described, and then the downward sweep of those most womanly outlines; and the small feet peering out timidly from beneath the hem of her train

> Suggesting the more secret symmetry
> Of those fair forms, that terminate so well;

and then the face, the more than Corinthian capital of

the human column—was it that of a pale-eyed, insipid, white-browed blonde—or—?

"My God! how wonderfully lovely!" rose almost to the lips of Fairfax, but he checked the impulse, and gazed in mute wonder, silent adoration. Was ever any thing so strangely, wonderfully, beautiful.

Those exuberant masses of soft light hair, every mazy tendril glittering in the candle light a ring of gold—that low, broad, ivory forehead, those straight fine-cut brows, and long-fringed lashes, black as night; those large eyes, deep, deep velvet brown, humid and lustrous; the regular oval of the pale, transparent face; the shapely Grecian nose, the least in the world *retrousse*, giving an arch character to the whole; the dark carnation lips, softly pouting, the pearly teeth sparkling between them; the rosy-rounded chin, set, how deliciously, upon the swelling throat.

Percy Fairfax had from his boyhood been a fanatic for beauty, and—though he had in badinage forsworn it to his dark Cleopatra of the minute—a fanatic for blonde beauty. A poet and a dreamer, he had dreamed an ideal not as yet found, never he fancied to be found except in the fairy regions of the mind.

And now she stood before him. Self-possessed conventionalist, case-hardened citizen of the world as he was, his heart fluttered fast for a minute, his brain swam, his eyes were darkened, he was recalled only by the arch voice and liquid laugh of the Cheshire at his ear.

"Oh! traitor. So you *do* think the insipid blonde beautiful! She is unappropriated, I told you, Colonel, shall I present you?"

"Not for the world!"

"Not for the world! La!" said Lady Ches. "Why? Do you think her too dangerous? I thought you did not admire blondes?"

"Who can admire any one, when he is at your foot-stool?"

"Too late! false knight, too late," she cried, laughing merrily. "Had you said that ten minutes ago, you might have deluded poor little me—who knows? by your soft nonsense. But now it is too late. Never try that again with me, I warn you, on your allegiance;" and she shook her finger at him in sportive menace.

Meanwhile the beautiful unknown was passing close before them. Her eyes had met the fiery glance of Fairfax rivetted upon her, though he lowered his the moment they encountered. From the roots of her hair to the top of her boddice, brow, cheeks, neck, bosom, she flushed crimson, nay! her shoulders blushed, and her arms to the fingers' end, painfully. Her eyes sank to the ground and she trembled, to Lady Cheshire's observant glance visibly, as she went by. She thought herself, perhaps, avoided, slighted, her thanks rejected, and the married brunette preferred before her. Could it be so? It might—women are singularly constituted creatures, and love to be loved even where they love not themselves—and are vexed often to see other women admired by whom they care not to be admired themselves. Was this so now?"

"Now, Colonel Fairfax, I insist upon it—I *will* introduce you. She is a beautiful girl, as any one must be blind not to see; and as good a little girl as ever lived, and the greatest pet at Melton. And it is really too absurd that two great grown up people, like you, should be making *petite mine;* she blushing to her fingers from real shame, and vexation that you could not see and acknowledge her pretty curtsy and *mille graces!* and you affecting—for of course in you it is the merest affectation—to be very bashful and retiring all on a sudden. I don't believe you were ever ashamed or bashful in your life, *mon Colonel,* more

especially with a lady in the case, though I dare say you have given plenty of them cause to blush, and to be ashamed, too. Come, I always have my own way —and I am resolved for once that you shall know Mary Merton."

"Mary Merton! what a pretty name!"

"So pretty that I don't believe she'd care to change it even for Fairfax, though you were to ask her, in the same voice that you asked me to dance with, half an hour since. What's your Christian name?"

"Heavens! why? Percy, at your pleasure."

"Miss Mary Merton—Mrs. Percy Fairfax. I don't know which is prettiest. Come, will you obey me?"

"I'd rather not, indeed. That is, not just *now*. I'm sure she would rather not. It will only distress her. Did not you see how she blushed just now?"

"I'd rather just now. I'm sure she would much rather dance with you, for you dance—there! don't look up for a compliment—pretty well, for an American. It will not distress her at all. It never does distress girls to make them blush. Besides, she only blushed because she thought you were flirting and making soft eyes at me, when all your eyes ought to have been on her, and her little curtsy."

"You would make me out something very—"

"There! there! You need not say that. Not half so much a something, as you think of yourself. Show me an American, who does not think more of himself than any one else does in the wide world, and I'll give you—"

"No, will you?"

"Yes—credit for modesty. There—now stay just where you are, and talk to prosy old Lord Glenlivat, but not a glance or a soft word to any woman on your life, 'till I come back to you."

And with a playful gesture of command, she sailed across the room and placed herself beside Mary Mer-

ton, whose partner had just seated her on a sofa beside a portly old dowager, and bowed himself off with a simper.

She was on an errand of good nature, for she was very, really, good natured; and in spite of all her little flirtations, and coquetries, and her love of admiration, and passion for making men in love with her for whom she did not care a straw, and her little, free, naughty speeches—there was not a bit of harm in her—not a bit. Not a breath even of calumny ever soiled the whiteness of her ermine, and all the world wondered how she could be so good a wife, and so preserve her kindness of heart and purity of soul, when coupled to so heartless, sensual a snob as Lord Cheshire; when exposed daily to the contamination of his presence, his conversation, his atmosphere, which corrupted all *men*, even, who ever came within reach of his contagion.

Fairfax obeyed orders, and talked with prosy old Lord Glenlivat about Burgundy and Verzenay, the only topics within the sphere of that noble intellect; but still he kept a furtive watch upon the pretty movements of the pretty creatures opposite.

They shook hands, and smiled, and Mary Merton blushed a little, and looked down; and Lady Cheshire talked earnestly and eagerly, and looked toward himself, and Mary half raised her eyes, and then blushed more, and looked down more. And then Lady Ches. talked more eagerly, and gesticulated more, and then laughed heartily, and made Mary Merton laugh heartily too, and then blush more. And so, after a chat of some ten minutes, she came swimming back with a very merry eye and a malicious smile.

"There, I told you so. She'll be very happy."

"It took you a hard struggle to make her very happy.'

"I didn't. I leave you to do that. Come, give me

your arm, and take me. No; not that way"—as Fairfax turned as if to go straight across the room to her. "Good God—do you want to charge the girl, as if she were a bullfinch. She can do that, by-the-bye, as well as you can, they say. No, come along, quietly this way, restrain your southern ardor and make love to me as hard as you can, 'till we get round the room and come upon pretty Mary unawares, so as to give her a chance of being unconscious."

It was done as she desired, and as they began to approach, Mary was seized by a strong impulse to converse earnestly with the portly dowager; and to do so leaned forward and turned round, thereby exhibiting a very lovely flexure of the neck and shoulders to Fairfax and his sparkling companion, and was of course utterly unconscious of their vicinity, 'till Lady Cheshire's gloved finger was pressed upon her shoulder, when she started, rose from her seat as Lady Ches took her hand, and looked inquiringly toward Fairfax, once more blushing a little, but not painfully.

"Mary, my dear, let me make you know Colonel Fairfax. Colonel, Miss Mary Merton, the Die Vernon of the Quorndon."

"Are you engaged for the next galloppe?"

"For the next—I believe not."

"And will you dance it with me?

"Willingly."

"There, I told you so, Colonel," laughed Lady Ches, maliciously. "I told him you would dance with him *willingly*, and he 'knew that you would rather not.' There now I'll leave you to yourselves; so be as agreeable to one another as you can—that means, I bequeath to you my parting doom of silence and stupidity."

Her words were not fulfilled, however; for though it is true in general, that such an injunction laid on two recent acquaintances is productive of embarrass-

ment and *gaucherie*, neither of the persons to whom the words were now sportively addressed were to be so put to silence; and, perhaps to conceal her own feelings, it was Miss Merton who spoke first.

"Have you long known Lady Cheshire, Mr. Fairfax? What a beautiful and kind person she is; don't you think so?"

"No, and yes, Miss Merton, only since Sunday evening, when I first had the honor of dining with her. Beautiful she is exceedingly—more beautiful, save one, than any I have ever seen, and very charming, and I do not doubt, kind too."

"Save one. Then you are an admirer of blue eyes, and prefer Isabella. She is lovely, but I don't agree with you. But then one's likings affect one's admirings so strongly that I may be biassed. I love Lady Cheshire dearly."

"And *you have* known her long."

"Almost as long as I have known any thing—ages before she was Lady Cheshire."

"The idea of your having known any thing, ages."

"Please, Colonel Fairfax, don't pay me any compliments, I detest them."

"And I—but you don't call that a compliment? I never say any thing to those whom I respect or admire, that I do not feel from my heart."

"But it is not always well to say every thing that one feels from his heart to every one, or at all seasons."

"Is it not? Why?"

"I don't know; do you always do it?"

"Too often, I'm *afraid*, if you disapprove. We are held to be very impetuous and impulsive beings in my country."

She had began to hold up her finger warningly, though with a very lightsome smile, as he uttered his

first sentence; but as she heard his last word, she looked surprised, and asked:

"Your country. Why? are you not an Englishman?"

"Nor ever was in England, 'till within the last two months."

"An American then of course, though I never met one before; were you ever in Canada, Colonel Fairfax, in Montreal or Quebec?"

"The last autumn before I sailed for France I was there; God bless me, Miss Merton, it must be so; you *are* Charley Merton's sister, of the 71st Lights."

"*Only* his sister, Colonel; and you knew, and—and liked him?"

"More than liked him; we are friends, and have corresponded for some years; how curious that I should meet his sister here?"

"And how pleasant," said she, softly, "it is so much pleasanter to owe thanks and kindness to friends than to strangers."

"Much pleasanter; but you owe me none of the first, though as much as you will of the second."

"Hush! Don't, please. The greatest obligation"—she said, artlessly and innocently laying her small hand on his arm—"think if I had fallen. I never would have danced again."

"A strong reason why I should be thankful," said Fairfax; "but won't you dance now; they are standing up?"

"Certainly," and she stood up, and took his arm. But, at this moment, Jardinier came up, and it was evident at a glance that he had been dining out, and drinking hard, to say the least. He walked straight up to Mary Merton, drawing on his kid glove as he came, with an air of dogged insolence, affecting not to recognize Fairfax, who felt Mary's hand tremble on his sleeve at his approach.

"My turn now, I believe, ain't it, Miss Merton?" muttered the peer.

"Your turn for what, my Lord?" she answered in a low voice, turning white and red rapidly in succession.

"Engaged to me, I mean, for this galloppe?"

"Certainly not, my Lord, for this or any other. You have not even asked me to dance, or spoken to me this evening."

"Short memory, I'm afraid," replied Jardinier with a sneer, and an insolent glance at Fairfax. "Old promise since last meeting; got a new partner, and short memory, hey?"

Mary turned deadly pale for one moment, and felt that she was on the point of fainting, but she had a resolute will, and exerted it resolutely, mastering her fears and feelings. But ere she could answer him, she heard Fairfax say as smoothly and serenely as if he had been asking the lout to take a glass of wine with him.

"Miss Merton's memory is not so short, my Lord Jardinier, but that she remembers how nearly you knocked her down this evening, and how completely you forgot to ask if you had hurt her. Come, Miss Merton, there is a clear space now;" and, passing his arm lightly round her waist, he swung her off into the swift maze, leaving the peer discomfitted and savage, gazing like Satan upon paradise.

As they paused and began to talk, he suddenly saw Matuschevitz's laughing face opposite, nodding to them both from the other side the circle, with an arch look, which at once recalled to Fairfax the conversation before dinner.

Mary nodded, and beckoned to him with her fan. "He is a friend of yours I know," she said half apologetically, "Lady Cheshire told me so. How odd

that out of so few mutual acquaintances, we should have so many mutual likings—"

"And dislikings—"

"Yes."

"You don't read Sallust, Miss Merton, or you would know what that wise judge of humanity says about that."

"What does he say?"

"'In short, to like and dislike the same things, that is true—*love*", he was about to add.

"Nonsense," she interrupted, before he could finish his sentence.

"Upon my honor, he says so."

"But you don't believe him."

"In this case—yes!"

"Let us take another turn;" and away they spun, dancing so well and gracefully, that many of the by-standers stood in their places enquiring and admiring.

When they paused, and she leaned panting on his arm for breath, Matuschevitz was waiting for them.

"Aha! Colonel. Well done! Did I not tell you so? Aha! Miss Mary, I foretold his fate to him, in you, and you see he has found it. So to reward me take a turn with me."

She looked enquiringly at Fairfax, he nodded and smiled "of course."

"Then *volontiers*," and away she went with the gay diplomat; and the half smitten Virginian had an opportunity to observe how exquisitely and modestly she danced, and how beautiful was her every movement. Just as she was coming back to him, Jardinier came up once more sneering fiendishly. "Colonel Fairfax, I believe?"

"At your service, my Lord."

"I think you were rude to me, sir."

"Do you *think* so, my Lord? you should *know* it, before you intrude upon a gentleman."

At this instant Matuschevitz came up with Mary Merton, who immediately took the arm of her partner. But pertinacious Jardinier was not to be repulsed; stepping forward again, "One turn with me, Miss Merton, to make friends."

"Pardon me, sir, Miss Merton is my partner;" interrupted the Virginian, whose hot blood was up by this time.

"But I presume you do not compel the lady's inclinations—"

"By no means, my Lord; if they are with you, you may have them *volontiers*."

"Come Miss Merton. Don't you hear, he has given you leave?"

"I require no one's permission to beg you to leave me at once, and never address me more. Sir Henry Merton is not yet too infirm to protect me from your Lordship's insolence; though he *was* the brother in arms of your Lordship's father, who was, I have heard him say, a very brave and honorable sailor. Come, Colonel Fairfax, one more turn with me if you please, and then take me to Papa."

The turn ended; Mary was very grave and silent. Fairfax was touched.

"Miss Merton, I regret much—I trust you are not ·—angry with me—hurt I mean—"

"Hush—no. Oh, no. Hush! please don't speak —here is papa—don't mention Charley to him. I'll— I'll tell you when we meet again. Thanks, Colonel Fairfax. Papa let me make you know Colonel Fairfax. He has been very good natured to me."

"Happy to make your acquaintance, Colonel Fairfax," said the bluff, portly, gray-haired sailor, stretching out his hand. "Almost know you already, Colonel. The duke, and Magher, and Goodricke, have been telling me all about you, and your riding. Well, Mary, have you got your shawl? So Colonel,

as the hounds draw my coverts to-morrow to throw off, if you'll come and breakfast with us, you'll meet some old friends at Merton Hall, and two new ones, hey, Mary? And you shall see my little girl ride too. She can take a rasper in her stride with the best of them, I mean her chesnut mare can. Will you come, Colonel?"

He looked at Mary's eyes, and Mary's eyes said, yes. So he said "yes" too, on the strength of it; shook hands with the old admiral, and on the strength of that shook hands with Mary too. And so the ball ended.

CHAPTER VIII.

A BREAKFAST, AND—BROKEN BONES.

It falls not within my department to describe the thoughts of people—whereas I am neither Judge Edmonds, nor Mesdames Fish and Fox, nor myself a medium, nor the owner of a medium through whom to converse with Benjamin Franklin, or Beelzebub, or any other of the omniscients—I shall not therefore attempt to look through the windows of his bosom into the secrets of Colonel Fairfax's heart; but as I was present at Melton Mowbray in those days, and myself a follower of the Quorndon, and moreover Percy's sole confidant in this matter, I can tell you, fair reader, what he said and did, and from that I doubt not you will be able to form, if you desire to do so, some idea of his thoughts also—for although to many men language is given to conceal and acts to contradict their thoughts, it was not so with Fairfax.

First, then, after handing Mary Merton into her carriage, he wrapped his cloak around him, lighted his cigar, and walked homeward without returning into the ball room, or giving any hint to the count of his proceedings. Secondly as soon as he got home he sent for his groom, ordered "Thunderbolt" to be sent as his first, and the strawberry roan mare by Sherwood out of Emma for his second horse, to Merton hall-door at half-past eleven, and "Crazy Jane" to be at his own door at half-past nine—for he had ascertained that Merton was some twelve miles distant—in the capacity of covert-hack. Thirdly, he went to bed. So that when Matuschevitz came home, having dis-

tinctly heard the invitation to breakfast given and accepted, he perfectly understood what was passing in the mind of the Virginian, and merely nodding his head knowingly, said to himself, "Hardly fair, master Virginian, hardly fair; but in love and war—in love and war. Ha! ha! ha! so it goes and has gone in all ages. Droll enough too! that I should have foreseen it all. Droll enough! but it's sure to come off if he don't break Jardinier's neck, which would be a public benefit to all the world but himself and the peer. Well; I'm glad I gave Beaufort a hint of what was in the wind. If any one can bring that cub to reason it is he. And as for you, Master Fairfax, since you are on the secret line I won't see any thing, or hear any thing, or think any thing, or do any thing, 'till you tell me, and then—I'll be deuced surprised, and—and—help you I suppose any way I can," and therewith he lighted a flat candle, swallowed a tumbler of curaçoa and soda, and went to bed heart-easy.

The next morning, occurrence most unusual, Fairfax was afoot before his servant brought in his hot water, and was down in the breakfast room ere Matuschevitz had aroused himself from his first slumbers, left a note apologising for his absence and explaining it, and was in his saddle at the minute. A few minutes spent in accurately learning his way, off he went at "Crazy Jane's" long loping canter, thinking to be above an hour on his way, but time and tide, though they wait for no man, are at times devoured by the eagerness of his will, and so it was that morning with the bold Percy Fairfax. The village clocks were barely striking ten as he cantered through the village of Merton in the vale, and pulled up at the neat lodge gates of Merton Park, with its long avenues of leafless elms casting long shadows over the trim greensward, never seen in merry England, and the old Eliz-

abethan hall, ivy-mantled and diamond-paned, at the end of the long perspective.

Then for the first time it occurred to his mind, whether he were not perchance too early, for with his sagacity of American woodcraft he saw at a glance that no hoof track had as yet broken the humid sod. Then he half repented, and half drew in his bridle. But the next moment, his own unconfessed and unshaped half-purpose dimly limning itself on his fancy, rather than on his mind, he threw the gate open, humming to himself the words of gallant Montrose—

> For sure he either fears too much,
> Or his deserts are small,
> Who would not put it to the touch
> To win or lose it all;

and without debating the matter any further, perhaps without wishing to debate, rode directly up to the Hall-door.

It stood open with a natty groom and a fat butler standing on the steps, the former of whom sprang to his stirrup, while the other bowed low, saying in a voice of quiet affirmation rather than enquiry, "Colonel Fairfax, sir."

"Just so. Is Sir Henry at home?"

"Sir Henry has gone down to the home farm, sir; he will be home in half an hour. Miss Mary is in the library, sir, if you please to walk this way."

Now Fairfax did please to walk that way, and was pleased also that Sir Henry was without and Miss Mary within; so he made no fuss about it, but did just as he was bid.

The library door was thrown open, and a very pretty picture lay before him. It was one of those queer old-fashioned rooms, full of odd corners and nooks, all filled with some appropriate piece of furniture, harmonious, but not symmetrical; here an old oaken *prie dieu*

of the Tudors, then a black walnut clock of the Stuarts, in that niche a full tilting suit of the Plantagenets, in that the baginet and corslet, petronel and broadsword of the commonwealth, and covering all the walls, where they were not pierced by the oriel windows, or the low-arched chimney in which a pile of oak-wood was blazing, were massive Gothic bookcases of oak, curtained with green damask. At a centre-table covered with writing implements, portfolios, papeteries, and other articles more purely feminine, sat the presiding genius of the place, holding a book in her hand, which I think she was not reading very attentively.

The purplish lustre through the stained glass of the oriel window fell like a glory over her light, golden hair, now braided closely round her classical head, and over her soft and pensive face, to which the decided black brows, and long jetty lashes, now relieved by her transparent cheek, lent so peculiar a character. She was so busily engaged either by her book or by her thoughts, that she did not hear the opening of the door until the butler announced, "Colonel Fairfax."

Then she rose suddenly, but without any flutter, and came forward to meet him. "How do you do, Colonel Fairfax; Papa, though he expected you early, was obliged to go down with the bailiff to the home farm on some sudden business, and left me to receive you. So here I am equipped for the field already."

Beautiful as he had thought her last night, she was lovelier still this morning, from the very contrast afforded by the serene and innocent style of her features impressed with a strong tinge of romantic fancy, and the huntress' garb, which on any form, less intrinsically womanly, might have been deemed too much a la Die Vernon. A scarlet riding habit, fitting close to her exquisitely moulded bust and shoulders, and clinging as if it had been a part of it to her rounded waist,

swelled evenly downward, without any plaiting or sharp division between the skirt and corsage, into a fall of massive draperies, perfectly concealing yet as perfectly suggesting the contour of her tall, lythe and rounded person. The tip of a brightly-polished Wellington boot, with a bright silver spur, glanced from beneath the hem, which she lifted a little with her left hand, as she stepped forward to welcome her father's guest, extending her right to greet him. A low-crowned broad-leafed hat, with a short black veil scarcely descending to the chin, lay on the table with a pair of white doe-skin gauntlets and a heavy straight silver-mounted jockey whip beside it.

So grave and even melancholy was her usually brilliant face, that the idea occurred to Fairfax, as he took the fair hand in his own, and bowed over it with something of the grace of the ancient regime, that La Penseroso was before him masking in the character of L' Allegro, or that the Christian Saint, Cecilia, had donned the heathenish garb of the huntress Diana.

A feeling, the like of which he had certainly never felt before, and which he could not explain to himself, came over him; and came over him too in some sort unpleasantly; for it was a sentiment of something nearly akin to reverence, and he was one who, if he reverenced at all, chose to reverence according to what it pleased him to call the dictates of reason, not of impulse. The worst features of his character, his pride, which was cold, and his obstinacy, which was perdurate, were aroused to resist what he chose to consider his weakness, and he listened to these ill-counsellors, and did ill.

"To speak frankly," she added, almost without a pause, "as I think best to do, I am not altogether sorry that Papa is not at home, for I want to speak a few words alone with you, and did not know when I

should have an opportunity, but I'm afraid you will think me a very strange girl—"

"A very charming one."

She did not draw herself up, nor blush now, nor snatch away her hand, which had rested in his one second, unconscious of evil, but she withdrew it quietly and said in a firm voice, with some melancholy, but no anger in her large soft eyes,

"Why did you say that? Oh! I wish you had not said that. You do not understand me. You treat me like any merry, bold girl—larking girl, I suppose you'd call it—when I would have met you as a friend, because you said you were my brother's friend. Nay, do not interrupt me, for I don't want apologies, they are just as empty as compliments, besides there is nothing to apologise for, since I know you did not wish to offend me, and I am not offended. You do not understand me, and it does not matter, whether you do or no—that's all, and there's no more to be said about it. Still I want to speak to you. It is about my brother. I asked you not to mention him before Papa, and I was going to tell you the reason. I choose to tell you that reason now, since what I said last night, if unexplained, would naturally lead you to imagine something dishonorable which should estrange such a father from a son—"

But here Fairfax, who had listened thus far attentive and a little surprised, but unabashed, for his evil pride was still in the ascendant, interrupted with so brief and convincing a disclaimer of the possibility of such an idea crossing his mind in reference to Charley, and spoke with such earnest warmth, and with such indignant truth flashing from his clear eyes, of that beloved brother, that the sister's heart warmed something to the speaker. Still her woman's heart was wounded, and she spoke sadly—

"It is well so. You understand him, still it is proper that you should hear me out. Will you listen?"

"Miss Merton, can you doubt it? Pray go on. You will know me better one day."

"There is little to tell. Papa, though the best of men and kindest of fathers, loving us both—we are his only two—with his whole heart, and desiring to render us happy with all his soul, believes that we cannot possibly be happy except by following his advice—commands I should say—for his counsel is ever a command, and not to take it is to be a disobedient child, a rebel!—and if there is one thing on earth he hates, it is a rebel. He hates a rebel as much at least as he loves his king, and him he loves second only to his God. Charley is, as I conclude you know, quick when aroused, reluctant under injury, and resolute under threats. Papa, it seems, had set his mind on a match for Charles, unsuspected by either him or me, with a very nice girl, a cousin of ours, much too nearly a sister in feeling ever to be a wife. Charley fell in love with the dearest little girl that ever lived, won her consent, and came in rapture to ask Papa's, when to his wonder, even more than his dismay, he was met by a command instantly to marry a woman he had never thought about more than he had about me, and who—he had every reason to believe—herself loved another. All this he pleaded, and much more, and last that his honor was committed—and to this it was replied that there was no honor above that of obeying orders; and the order followed that he should instantly marry her whom he did not love and who does not love him, on pain of being cut off with our mother's fortune, which was happily settled upon him, the family estate being settled on me. If Charley would have waited but a while, as I advised and implored him, if he would have plainly asked our cousin to become his bride, he would have been as plainly re-

fused, for within a fortnight Emily married her lover, a young nobleman of great worth and talents, and on her would all my father's wrath have fallen. He would not. He answered my father, at the end of three days which had been allowed him for his decision, as he should not have answered him, and on the third day was married at Gretna Green to the choice of his heart. No sooner did papa hear it than his word was kept, as we all knew it would be. Charley succeeded to my mother's fortune of a few annual hundreds, and I am the unhappy heiress of more than as many thousands, but that inheritance I never will receive. Sir Henry has never once even named his name since he accepted a staff appointment in Canada, and sailed thither with his charming and excellent young wife, and it only excites his anger to hear him named, above all, with praise. I knew that you would naturally name him, when to do so would have been injurious to him, perhaps ruinous, and painful to yourself. It was this which made me wish to speak with you alone for five minutes; and, therefore, I told you frankly that I was glad papa was not at home when you came in. I thank you, Colonel Fairfax, that you have taught me that it is unwise, if not unwomanly, in a young woman to speak frankly, or I should say bluntly, to a gentleman."

There was something in her manner, in her beautiful calm dignity, sincere truthfulness, and severe straightforwardness of purpose and deed which struck Fairfax very forcibly. Here was a character such as he had never met before—an intellect of the firmest, a disposition of the softest. A mind so clear, a will so purely strong, united with a soul so gentle, and a form so lovely, he had never before encountered—never dreamed of. He knew, too, that if he had not really wronged her, or misinterpreted her motives in his own mind, he had given her deep cause to believe

that he had so. It was not easy to make her perceive this, yet he knew that he could make her feel it. Again he saw that it was not quite the time to attempt it, and this, with a lingering of pride, and an unwillingness to humble himself, perhaps in vain, so far as he ought to humble himself, led him to answer her—

"You do not wish, I suppose, to hear the explanation, which, upon my honor! I believe will satisfy you, that—"

"Pardon me, for interrupting you," she said sweetly, "but I had rather not. I will not deny that you have wounded me in a manner I did not expect from you. No explanations can remove the sense of humiliation which I feel; and we had better remain as we are."

"It is not *you* that I would humiliate; but," he proceeded bitterly, "you do not wish me to speak—and I am silent. You say, 'we had better remain as we are'—I hope that is 'friends.'"

"All who are friends to my brother are my friends," she answered, with a smile which was as cold as that of an April morning, when an early frost has checked the growing verdure of the spring. "This has been an unpleasant topic, when I meant it should have been agreeable—let us say no more about it. And hark! here comes papa."

Perhaps even as Mary Merton spoke these words she half repented—perhaps she felt that the explanation, the apology, for such it must have been, of so proud a man once rejected never would be renewed or tendered any more—perhaps she reflected that to be grieved and refuse consolation, to be offended and reject reparation is neither wise nor just—perhaps she half admitted that the explanation might have made her happier not only than she was, but than she had ever been before. She knew that she felt sadder now than she had ever felt, and was half angry at herself, for being sad she knew not wherefore.

The conversation was, however, summarily disposed of, for Sir Henry came into the room booted and spurred, but equipped in morning jacket as fresh from his farming avocations, which were his hobby, and, as every one very well knew, a pretty expensive one too, and his hearty and somewhat prolix greetings set aside every thing else for the moment, and in a few minutes after the Duke of Beaufort, Sir Harry Goodricke, Magher and Lord Alvanley were severally announced, and then, "Breakfast is on the table, if you please, ma'am," from the stately butler, ushered the fair company to a handsome breakfast-room overlooking the park from a pretty bay window, and to that pleasantest, most cheerful and most degagé of meals, an English breakfast.

Around the hospitable board a merry half-hour was soon spent, but spent less merrily by Fairfax than any other person, perhaps, of the party; for just at the moment when he was beginning to be sensible that she was something much more than a charming girl, hundreds of whom he had met already in all quarters of the world, from the White Sulphur Springs and Saratoga, to the Bains de Mont d' Or in Auvergne, to Schlangenbad and Baden, to Almacks and the Faubourg St. Germain, and something very nearly approaching to his ideal of a very woman, he felt that he had by an idle word deeply wounded her in the tenderest point of a truly feminine nature, and he began to feel that what he had done was irreparable, even if he could subdue his pride into even a new advance.

While he was thus torturing himself to no purpose, and she was doing the honors of her table charmingly, chatting playfully with the Duke, of whom she was an especial pet, and keeping up the ball of conversation 'with all the world and the rest of mankind,' seeing all the while out of the corner of her eyes the discomposure of the Colonel. and beginning very shrewdly to

suspect—for what woman ever excited the smallest spark of passion in a male breast without being conscious of it—that the handsome Virginian really *did* think her a charming girl, a distant rate and the clanging report of a hunting whip turned the current of all thoughts and eyes to the park.

And lo! across the green, well-kept lawn, the beautiful dog-pack, twenty couple of glossy, many-colored beauties, with great bland fawning eyes, and high-waving feathery sterns, came trotting along as steadily as veterans, at the heels of "Clinker," bestridden by Jack Stevens, and kept in order by the voices and whips of three or four light scarlet-frocked whippers-in.

The *squeal* of the squire was next heard, and in he came, full of fun as usual, clamoring for his cup of coffee and thimblefull of curaçoa, with half the hunt at his heels; and the quiet breakfast-room was converted into a levee of gay scarlet jackets and white leathers, worn by cavaliers as gallant and as daring as ever rode the ring before the hapless Mary, or her hard rival, lion-hearted Bess of England.

A few minutes more; and the squire looked at his watch, and asked the admiral which of his coverts was likeliest to hold a fox.

"The osier holt by the Arningsby brook-side. My keeper tells me a large dog-fox has haunted it all the season."

"The osier holt be it then," said the squire. "Magher, as you're going to make a start, I see, be good enough to tell Stevens to get forward to the osier holt. Now, gentlemen, boot and saddle is the word. I hope the chestnut mare is in trim, Miss Mary, for the flats will be hough deep to-day, if pug heads toward Loughborough and the river, which with this south-easter he is like enough to do."

"Look at her, squire," she answered, pointing with her whip to the fine, highly groomed chestnut mare,

which a smart boy of some five stone odd was leading up and down before the steps of the terrace. "Don't you think she has got the go in her to-day?"

"I think you have, at all events," said the squire, laughing. "Only don't go too far, that's a good lassie. Come, lads, to the pigskin—to the pigskin, and you, who have got to find your hunters, had better gallop, I can tell you, for Jack Stevens waits for neither man nor money, and I shall throw off without stopping a minute, even for you, Miss Mary. So make your bows like me, and *go away*, like the fox we hope for."

His words were obeyed to the letter, all the party, oldsters and youngsters alike, bowing or shaking hands, and following their favorite, Osbaldiston. But as Fairfax, like young Edwin in the ballad, "bowed among the rest," with a very blank and disconsolate aspect indeed, Mary's heart relented, and she addressed him with a smile, "Colonel Fairfax, if you can find your way to the library, and will bring me my hat, gloves and riding whip which I left on the table, you will oblige me, and you shall be my cavalier *en guerdon*, unless you are in too great haste to be off with these mighty hunters."

The grateful glance of the Virginian aroused her as he turned away to execute her bidding, and when he returned she was alone with the admiral, who was fussing about his sandwich-box and his flask of sherry, without which he would about as soon have gone into the field, as he would into action without ports open and matches lighted.

"Thanks," and she hatted, veiled and gloved herself before the mantle glass, without a shadow of coquetry or affectation, and then, taking his arm, said gently, "and now if you will help me to mount Bonnibelle, we shall be ready by the time Papa has got his sandwiches and sherry. There is no hurry at all,

for the squire told me he should draw the Long Rearsby wood before the osier holt, and there is no more chance of a find in it, than in this breakfast-room."

"Thank you," said Fairfax; and the words, little as they said in themselves, spoke volumes in the deep, low, modulated tones which contained them.

"Ah Bonnibelle, pretty Bonnibelle," she said, kissing the white star on the beautiful mare's forehead, while she laid down her ears, and arched her neck, and whinnied at the well-known voice and expected caress. "Now, colonel," and, raising the long skirt of her habit with her left hand, she laid her right on the pummel, and extended the tip of the prettiest little foot in the world to the gloved hand of Fairfax.

In a moment, and without an effort, she was on Bonnibelle's back, the picture of grace and elasticity at rest, settling her ruffled draperies, arranging her white gauntlets, shredding her reins, flattering her mare's neck with soft caresses, the fairest and most feminine of amazons. Fairfax spoke not, but gazed, and—I suppose—thought.

Sir Harry's robust voice came through the open door, "Mary, Mary, this tiresome devil of a fellow, Battersby, is at me again, about the new Alderney cows, and I cannot come for half an hour. Ride on with Fairfax, and I'll overtake you before they find."

Their eyes met mutually, spontaneously—neither knew, neither meant to convey any thing by that sudden glance; yet as the eyes met the same thrill shot through each, a heart spasm, instantly understood—instantly confessed.

Those, who have felt what I mean, will understand me, for to them I speak * Φωναντα συνετοισι; to those who have not, I speak Hebrew To one it said, "she

* Literally, "*words speaking* (intelligible) *to the wise.*"—PINDAR.

likes me—to the other, "he loves me." For the woman's perception is ever the first, and she jumps quickest to the ultimate conclusion.

Neither said, this time, "I am not sorry papa is not coming," but her eyes spoke it very audibly to him, and his replied no less palpably to her that she was something more than "a very charming girl."

> He saw her on a nearer view,
> A spirit yet a woman too;
> Her household motions light and free,
> And steps of virgin liberty;
> A countenance in which did meet
> Sweet records, promises as sweet;
> A creature not too bright and good,
> For human nature's daily food
> For transient sorrows, simple wiles,
> For praise, blame, kisses, tears, and smiles;

and then both smiled as they smiled last night, only, as the Virginia nigger said, more so.

"We are friends," he whispered.

"When I do things, I never do them by halves," and she cast down her eyes.

"And you will hear me now?"

"I'd rather not, but if you wish it—"

"I'd rather."

"Then I will."

And did he not vault to the back of Thunderbolt, merely gathering the reins in his right, scarcely poised on the thin mane and high withers, in a fashion that astonished that steadiest and most sober-minded of veteran hunters, to the very extremity of horse capacity to be astonished. A fact clearly proved by the execution of a curious caracole by that serious quadruped, the first probably since the days of his foal-caperings by his mother's side.

The whole made Mary laugh, a merry, silver laugh which sealed the treaty—made the West-Riding York

shire groom—who had been thrown into the bargain with "Thunderbolt," because he had looked after him so long, and knew his ways—stare with eyes as big as saucers, while he pulled his forelock, and mutter, as the handsome pair rode away, "God! an if t' Yankee raide that gait he'll be aff, afore at they faind." A prophecy which I do not find to have been fulfilled according to my notes of the events, as they occurred, made on the spot.

Meanwhile, one thing is certain, that they rode away very lover-like; there is nothing on earth like a little quarrel, a passing cloud over the first sunshine of May morning, and a little reconciliation, for ripening the dawn of fancy into love.

And yet, though either party confessed readily that the other was desperately in love, neither was in the slightest degree prepared to confess the same in regard to self. Oh! self! and yet when such things be at all, for the most part—aye! ninety and nine times out of the hundred—they be simultaneous.

On they rode, along the lanes, the green winding lanes of England, green still, even in mid-winter, with rathe grass, and furze, and hollybrakes, and here and there a misletoe bough upon the giant limb of some gnarled oak, as leisurely as if the Quorndon had not heard the squire's "Eleu! Eleu! in. Eleu in! good lads," ten minutes before, and as if the sailing flight of the shy wood pigeons at first, and then the whirring of the startled pheasants skating above their heads alarmed, ought not to have informed them that Long Rearsby wood was half drawn already.

Never was there a much longer, and never—to judge from the attracted attention of both parties—a much more satisfactory explanation or confession, or whatever it might be called, than that of Colonel Percy Fairfax of Accomac, Virginia. To judge from the lady's rosy blushes; but perhaps they were only the light

reflected upward from her scarlet habit—his explanation was not very humiliating to her self-esteem. Nor, to judge from the sparkling eyes of the gentleman—though they might have been flashing with indignation at his own wickedness—was his self-humiliation very distressing; though, God knows, I believe he accused himself of a longer catalogue of all the cardinal vices, than the Pope of Rome ever listened to on Palm Sunday.

The absolution, however, was soon granted, it would seem; and it is very certain that whether Colonel Fairfax understood Mary Merton or not, whether he understood himself or not, or any thing else "on the earth, or in the heavens above the earth, or in the waters under the earth," it is very certain that within five minutes after he began explaining, Mary Merton understood him from the crown of his hat to his under spur leather. But she did not tell him so, I suppose, because she wanted to understand him better.

Two or three farm servants whom they had sauntered past unnoticing, but not unnoticed, nudged one another as they stared; and of the last two who stood stock-still scratching their shock heads and glaring after them, one said:

"Lauk a' maighty, Tummas, beant they two a love-talking?"

But desperately was honest Hodge out; not love-talking a whit; for not a syllable about love had passed the lips of either; only love-making, with all their hearts, and souls, and eyes, and tongues; only for hands and lips the love-making had been perfect.

Yet neither had the smallest suspicion of the love-making, and *she* only had a faint suspicion that she was being—made-love-to—if I may coin a word for the occasion.

There came a loud lubberly whoop just before their noses, and they awoke.

A farmer's boy was holding a gate wide open before them; for at this point the lane ended in a wide, open pasture, sloping downward, with a wide stretch of grass land below it, to a wide brook, with an osier bed on the farther bank, about a mile and a half to the left, hard before them. The whoop had been extracted from the lout by the view of a magnificent dog-fox, who was crossing their paces at about three fields' distance, pointing down to the river bed. And both saw at once that the air must have been alive for ten minutes at the least with the challenges of single hounds, the crash of the pack, the cheers of the whippers-in, and the squealing yell of Osbaldiston. For Long Rearsby wood lay about a mile distant from them, on the same ridge on which they stood, in their rear, to the right, and midway the declivity between the fox and the wood came the pack, heads up and sterns down, the nucleus of the comet, whose tail of horsemen was scattered already a mile long, back to the skirts of Rearsby. A table cloth might have covered the hounds, so well together did they run. Their pace was tremendous.

In the same field with them, foremost of the post flight, in which were the Squire, Val. Magher, George Paine, Campbell of Saddell, Goodricke, and Alvanley, and Holyoke, and half a dozen other good ones, rode Jardinier, whose light weight told, while his horse, a splendid bay, well up to fifteen stone, was fresh; which he did not appear like to be very long, so fiercely, though quite needlessly, was his rider bucketing him along.

The fact is, that worthy was in a worse temper even than was usual with him. He had, from the first, jealous of Fairfax, conceived a violent dislike to him at being beaten in their first trial of strength as riders, a dislike no wise diminished by his subsequent

defeat in their second trial of courtesy and temper in the ball-room.

He had begun, therefore, to say very disagreeable and rude things about the Virginian funking and backing out, when he saw that he was late at the covert side. At last, as the first hound challenged, and no Fairfax was to the fore, he cried out aloud, close to Matuschevitz, who had a shrewd enough guess how matters were going,

"By G— I knew it. The militia colonel *has* backed out. Fifty to a poney he don't show to-day."

Long Rearsby wood stands on the highest knoll of a long crest of knolls; the lane by which Fairfax and Mary were sauntering unconsciously along, lay below it, and in one place a cross lane ran up from it in a right line, to the spot where Jardinier and the Russian Count were standing, as the former uttered this choice morsel of the vernacular.

In the very point of time in which he spoke, it so chanced that the pair crossed the opening of the lane, full in view of the field. Mary Merton's fair neck was bent, and her eyes fixed on Bonnibelle's mane just above the withers, her hands lying listlessly in her lap, the reins flowing loose, and the mare choosing her own path. Fairfax was leaning toward—almost over—her; and the animation of his demeanor was visible even at that distance.

Matuschevitz twigged it all in a minute, pointed maliciously with his whip to the graceful couple, and said—

"You would lose, to a certainty, Jardinier; for there he comes with his *elle;* and by all appearance they are both listening to sweeter sounds, than this dog-music, melodious as it is—" At this second the fox broke straight for the osier holt. "By Jove!" shouted the Count, "if pug holds that line, Fairfax

will have a fair start yet. Two ponies to your one, Jardinier, that he beats you again to-day."

"Done!" roared the peer, "I'll kill him and myself too, first," and down came his whip-stock like a sabre-cut on "Merlin's" flank, and away he went abreast of the first hound that broke covert, amid a volley of oaths from the squire, and the curses, deep not loud, of the whole field.

"I hope *he'll* kill *you;* and I think he will," said the Russian to himself, in hard, cold earnest, and followed at a more reasonable, though still a slashing pace. So stood affairs as they two awoke from their day-dream.

"They actually have found, in Rearsby wood, Miss Merton."

"Actually, they have," she replied, with an arch smile, "and we have the luck of the turn, Colonel. A little more to the left. Now, Bonnibelle, good girl," and with the words she gave her bridle rein a shake, and, like a swan in the air or a ship on the sea, they swept, graceful girl and graceful mare, down the gentle declivity; Fairfax followed, scarce half a length behind.

The Colonel and his *elle*, as Matuschevitz had mischievously termed her to plague Jardinier, on the left, the fox, the pack, and the field on the right, riding on two converging lines which would meet if produced at the osier holt. But the line of our friends, who were already nearer to the fox than were the hounds themselves, was so much shorter than the other that it was only necessary for them to maintain a good hard gallop in order to nick the field at the brook, and then fresh horses against blown ones, ho!

The grass-land, so far, was firm, level, and unbroken by furrow or molehill, and Mary Merton kept her hands well down, and her rein slack, yet on a pull, and galloped.

The first fence was what would be called a rasper for most men and most horses. It consisted of a small grip of some three feet width, a bank of about twelve inches, with a post and three rail fence, and an old clipped thorn hedge of not less than three feet and a half, within it. Beyond this was a drain full of bright water, at least ten feet in width.

The color of her cheek did not flush or pale, her eye laughed wickedly, her moistened lip almost smiled, as she gave Bonnibelle her head, and let her go at it, without a pull, hands down, and as easy in her saddle as a New York merchant-princess in a rocking chair.

Nothing on earth is more graceful and easy than the sweep of a thorough-bred over a rasper, and when to the beautiful curves of the animal were added the more exquisite lines of beauty of the girl's supple swaying figure, nothing can be conceived more lovely. No centaur of old fable ever was more thoroughly one animal than Mary showed with Bonnibelle over that spanking leap.

Another grass field swallowed in the increasing gallop of the hunters—another fence, a nasty lean to paling of five feet, with no ditch on either side; and Mary turned her rosy cheek—rosy with the blythe innocent excitement—to her admirer, who held "Thunderbolt" unemulous, one length behind her, as if to see how he handled his horse; nodded her head, took Bonnibelle in hand a bit, and then, when close in on the ugly fence, up went the little elbows, and in went the little heel, and Bonnibelle was popped over the palings before she knew where she was. Another grass field, and a stiff up leap, to clear a sunken ditch faced with strong masonry, and still the lady kept the chesnut mare's head straight, and never wavered in her seat, or shook in her stirrup.

One more field of above fifty acres grass, still grass, a little plashy as it sank toward Arnesby brook, which

bounded it—a deep brimful rivulet, with steep banks of eighteen or nineteen feet of bright water. On the farther bank lay the osier holt, of about three acres, a little to their right, which the gallant fox had dashed through without stopping, and had been viewed away in good style. Down this grass field Mary and the Virginian, headmost now of the field, galloped at racing pace alone. But in the next, divided from them by but a single parallel fence, thundered the field, about a hundred yards behind, but riding parallel. The hounds swept over the brook, and the osiers crashed but once as they broke into them.

Mary put the mare's head, held hard, right at the bright water; the marshy ground, half quagmire, shook under her—but she increased her pull, sent in her single spur, and skimmed it like a seagull, turning in her saddle, as she soared over it, to laugh at Fairfax, with a wave of her silver-handled whip above her head, and a musical "hurrah! first over!"

It was a wondrous sight, even though the ground had favored her, to see a girl leading a field of men, and such men, and so mounted, and yet withal so femininely soft, so full of every woman grace and woman mirthfulness.

In a second, "Thunderbolt" was at her side—the noble brute would be held back no longer, the stuff was in him, and must out.

A moment after, Jardinier's yell was heard as he cleared the Arnesby, the leader of his own squad, by a hundred yards, as he was a hundred yards in the rear of his leaders.

Her eyes were fixed on the Virginian's face, and she saw it pale, and his lips whiten, and his eye lighten, as he heard Jardinier's yell of defiance. She saw that his soul was in it—that he must conquer.

"Never mind me! go on!" she whispered, "never mind me! no one does! Go on, and beat *him*, please."

He looked at her half doubtfully; and again that glance was interchanged, and she said:

"I'd rather."

He nodded, with a world's eloquence in eye and lip, though he spoke not.

"Beside," she added, "the pace will soon be too much for Bonnibelle."

As he had crossed the holt the fox lay up a little to the right, enabling Jardinier also to lay up a little, and take a pull, still improving his position toward the lead. The next fence, a rasping bull-finch, was taken abreast in their stride by Bonnibelle and Thunderbolt, the lady leaving a fragment of her riding skirt, fluttering like a banner among the topmost branches. Jardinier took it a hundred yards to their right, now not above fifty in their rear. More to the right lay up the hounds, and this brought Jardinier almost abreast of Fairfax. He would have been quite so, had he laid up too, as he ought.

But he kept doggedly on, with his horse's head pointed right at Thunderbolt's quarter. Bonnibelle was thrown by the turn six lengths behind either.

The hounds topped the fence, a tremendous five-barred post and rail of solid timber, at the head of a steep drop.

The first rule of riding to hounds—the very first—is never to cut in before, or across, or upon, a rider, going at his fence on his own perpendicular line. And no one knew this better than Jardinier. But he felt that his own horse had half his puff out, while he saw that "Thunderbolt" was as fresh as when he started. He must be beaten again; or—make his word good.

He held resolutely on. The fence was about fifty yards distance, both horses at their full stretch extended.

Had Fairfax persevered, as his was the right to do, on his own straight line, Jardinier would have leaped

upon his quarters, as he leaped diagonally; he meant to do so.

Fairfax too knew the rules of riding, and his right, and saw Jardinier's felon movement, but gave no sign.

Mary Merton saw it too, and turned pale as death, but, like a brave girl as she was, screamed not, but rode onward, firm and cold as death.

The horses still at speed, the fence ten yards distance—on a sudden, in a twinkling of an eye, Fairfax stood bolt up in his stirrups, and by one mighty effort pulled Thunderbolt up a length—Jardinier shot across him, rose at his leap, diagonally, right before his nose, but as suddenly as he had risen in his stirrups, so suddenly sank Fairfax into his seat, lifted the fresh, powerful brown hunter into his stride again, sent the persuaders in three times to the road-heads, and, firm as a rock, with a rein taut as the rigging of a ship, rushed him at it. With a savage yell, almost an Indian whoop, he rose him at it, and the good horse made good his strong name, "Thunderbolt."

The felon lord was taken in his own trap—full on his flank as he cleared the rails, counter on, plunged Thunderbolt, and, in a cloud of dust, both horses and both men rolled over.

But the girl—the glorious girl! not a man in the whole field dreamed that in any event she would have cleared those bars—much less, with such a tragedy before her.

Not one of them knew a true girl's heart.

Pale as a marble statue, and as firm and as cold, both of pulse and purpose, she set Bonnibelle under a hard pull at it, and with a lift that a New Market jock might have envied, carried the good chesnut mare clear over it, though her toes grazed the top rail.

A simultaneous, heartfelt cheer, scul-fraught, burst from the whole of that cold, unimpressive, unimpassioned, unadmiring, high-born field—never before was

such a sight seen, such a sound heard, at Melton Mowbray.

Matuschevitz, anxious for his friend, was the first over the barrier, and what a picture lay before him.

"Thunderbolt" stood erect, covered with dust, scratched skin-deep in many places, but otherwise unscathed, whinnying for his master. Fairfax sat on a low bank, pale as death, with a thin stream of blood trickling from his temple, and his right arm hanging, with a ragged sleeve, limber by his side. But his senses were about him, for he was smiling at Mary, who knelt beside him, fanning him with her hat, while Bonnibelle, with reins and stirrup flying masterless, led the chase far aloof.

Jardinier and the beautiful bay, Merlin, lay, as they had fallen, motionless, seemingly dead.

"By heaven! he has killed him. I thought so," said Matuschevitz. "Fairfax, old fellow, how are you?"

"Oh! I shall do," replied the Virginian faintly. "Look to them. They are far worse—I fear the worst. I take you all to witness, it is his deed, not mine. I must have done as I did, or died tamely. His blown horse must have crushed me."

"You did right, nobly, all that you could do," said Beaufort, who had just come up, and then Mary Merton looked up into the Duke's face, smiled, burst into tears, fainted.

It was for a while confusion worse confounded. But water was soon brought, and a surgeon was in the field.

Jardinier had fared better than he deserved. A collar bone and six ribs broken, with a slight concussion of the brain, rewarded his attempt at deliberate murder. For it was scarce less than murder, and self-murder. But the beautiful bay Merlin colt was dead —the first vertebra of the neck broken.

So much for a brutal temper, and ungoverned passions.

Fairfax came cheaply off in comparison, with a simple fracture of the arm, a dislocated ancle, and a few scratches.

Brave "Thunderbolt" had saved his master, and was uninjured.

Mary Merton's faint was soon over, and the news made her, when she heard it, as well as ever. The old admiral had come up too, and Mary and he both insisted that Fairfax should be carried no whither but to Merton Hall, and no whither else was he carried. So for the present there we'll leave him.

Jardinier was not carried to the devil then—though no one would have cared a farthing if he had been.

Whither he may be carried some day, is more doubtful.

Should I hear, and you care about it, I'll tell you, gentle reader.

CHAPTER IX.

A BOTHER, AND—A BRIDE.

For two long months Percy Fairfax lay, after the first week, on the sofa in the drawing-room at Merton Hall; and for two long months Mary Merton nursed him—not as the ladies of the middle ages nursed their *preux chevaliers*, with lint and simples, and the homely medicaments of their gentle skill; but with her soft society, her sparkling conversation, her low voice, clear as a silver bell, reading to him, her rare contralto, magnificent, singing to him.

Happy man, Percy Fairfax!

They had no need to make love, it was made to them; or it had existed from the beginning unmade, uncreated, awaiting only the touch of Ithuriel's spear for its full revealment.

They had no need to talk love, for they inhaled it at every breath, expired it every breath, fed on it in their minds, drank it in their wine, lived on it by day, dreamed of it by night. Yet they never spoke of it—they seemed content to let time flow on in this happiness unquestioned, so long as it would flow on. Every one took it for granted. The admiral smiled without speaking. He had inquired of the American minister—nothing could be more satisfactory. A birth, noble, in England—wealth, fabulous, in Virginia tobacco, South Carolina Cotton, Georgia rice, Louisiana sugar, not to mention the niggers, unnameable in English ears humane.

And Fairfax has recovered, and the cream of the

hunting season is over, and his leave of absence has expired. To-morrow he must return to his bureau.

It is dark, cold March evening—the rain is loud upon the casements; the wind is loud among the turrets; a bright wood fire is flickering on the hearth in the library; and Mary Merton sits—where we saw her sit on that hunting morning—with her beautiful head bowed upon her hands, weeping, silently, bitterly.

The door opened noiselessly, and the fine head of Fairfax was intruded. With an inaudible step he crossed the room; and, before she knew he was near her, one arm was round her waist, one hand had clasped her cold fingers.

"Mary, my own, are these tears for me?"

Her form thrilled in his embrace, like the aspen in a breeze; she raised her beautiful large eyes, gazed on him wistfully, but with a sad, sad gaze. She made no effort to withdraw herself from his arm, but only shuddered, from head to foot, as if in an ague fit.

"Oh! Fairfax—don't, please don't—you hurt me."

"Hurt you?"

"Yes! sadly, cruelly. I can't bear it."

"*I* hurt you, who could die for you—who owe my life to you. Oh! Mary Merton, I hurt *you!*

"Yes! that is it—that is it. How could I do so? What a wicked, wicked girl I am."

"For saving me, Mary?"

For one moment her old smile lit up her face, but she burst into tears again. "Oh, no! not that—not that. Oh! you will hate me now, Percy Fairfax."

"I do not understand you."

"God help me, I don't know if I understand myself. But I—I—Fairfax—Fairfax—I—I can't *be* —your's. There—it is spoken."

And she burst into a wilder paroxysm of tears than ever.

"Great God! and can I have misunderstood you?"

She raised her head slowly, shook back her hair from her eyes, and looked full in his face. "No!"

"What is it then?—speak, for the love of God! speak to me, Mary Merton."

"I *cannot* tell you."

"Is it your father who opposes?"

She shook her head.

"Another, whom you prefer—?"

She *looked* at him, but spoke not.

"Pardon! whom you are forced to wed?"

"Death could not *force* me."

"You torture me."

"I know it—yet myself am tortured more. I cannot tell you any thing, but only this: I cannot be yours *now*—I fear I cannot *ever*. And yet I cannot tell you wherefore, and I must bear your ill opinion; you must think me wicked, heartless, false—"

"Hush! hush! I will not hear you!" and he spoke for the first time in his life, to her, sternly. "One question. You say, you cannot wed me *now?*"

"I cannot."

"And, perhaps, *never?*"

"Perhaps never."

"And you will not tell me wherefore?"

"I *cannot*."

"And yet, Mary Merton, you—you—Mary Merton—you—?"

"Love you, Fairfax, now and for ever, here and hereafter. Love you through joy and hope, through anguish and despair. You, and you only."

"I am not *all* unhappy."

And he caught her close, close to his embrace, and she forbid him not, but returned his embrace; but the embrace and the kiss were clay cold, and her icy tears bedewed his brow.

"And you do not hate me?" she said, with a strange, calm expression.

"Mary—my angel, my own soul!"

"And you believe me, and that I have a reason—a true reason?"

"As I believe that I am a man, and 'that in my flesh I shall see God.'"

"Noble, good, glorious Fairfax—and must I make *you* wretched?"

"Can you give me no hope?"

"I dare not."

"But, when we meet again—?"

"When *shall* we meet again, or where?"

"In London."

"*We* never go to London. You and I must never meet more, unless—there!" and she pointed upward.

"God's will be done. It is almost more than I can bear; but I am a *man*, and *will* bear it. Mary, best and most beautiful, do not forget me, as, through life unto death, I never will forget you. And if—if—if this barrier pass away, you—"

"I will, Percy Fairfax, by my life—on my soul—I will."

"Mary, my own, own Mary Merton."

"Through life and in death, if never, ever yours!"

He clasped her, and released her. It was over.

He turned; and, as he reached the door, looked back to her and said, solemnly, in the language of his land's greatest poet—

"The setting of a mighty hope is like the close of day."

He was gone. Alas! for Mary Merton.

A bright balmy afternoon in July, Hyde Park crowded; all the world of England's patrician beauty in their equipages, unrivalled for taste and horseflesh

the world over; in the ring, the flower of England's manhood, a-horse and around them.

A pony phæton, with four wee white ponies and two lady charioteers, the beautiful black-glancing Cheshire and soft Isabella, creeps slowly round the ring, pauses near Buckingham gate; a dark cavalier, on a superb white horse, leans over them, his hand resting on the hood of the phæton. But his face is very sad; more than sad, melancholy—more than melancholy, apathetic! he smiles, but it is with his lips only, from his teeth; not with his eyes, from his heart; and he talks earnestly with those lovely beings, and they are earnest in reply. He loves them not, but likes, almost more than loving. They are bound to him by the memory of a time. He is Percy Fairfax. He starts, his eye has caught something, his hat is off, he bows, his spur is in white Moonbeam's side—he is away, among the press; through the gate; in Rotten Row.

What was it caught his eye? The vision of a beautiful chesnut thorough-bred mare, sweeping, like a swan through the air—a ship through the sea—among the high-bred throng, and on her back a supple, swaying figure, a long dark riding habit, a low-crowned, broad-brimmed hat, a black veil scarcely shadowing the rosy chin.

Away! Hope is on the wind, and life! Away!

Again a glimpse—those sloping shoulders, the bend of that slender neck, those tresses of pale gold of the rider—those round muscular long, let-down quarters, that full, swinging bang tail, of the ridden—out of ten thousand they are Bonnibelle, and Mary Merton.

Moonbeam is at his speed, he devours the Row—they are almost overtaken, but she has pulled up, and he pulls up too, to sate his eyes on that presence. It is she, and the old admiral, and another female figure; and is it?—it *is* Charley—by her side.

They wheeled. Fairfax and Moonbeam halted, and

met them face to face. Brow, cheeks, neck, blazed as *once* before; but she rode out a horse's length before the others, and met him midway.

They shook *both* hands, horses and reins unheeded.

"I am so glad to see you, Mary."

"And I; so *very*—so very, *very* glad. And here are papa, and your old friend Charley, Colonel Fairfax; and here is little Fan, Mrs. Charles Merton, I should say; and they have brought home a little Henry Merton, and papa has forgiven him."

A strange gleam of day-light appeared to dawn upon Fairfax. He thought he saw light through the cloud which had so strangely, so unexpectedly, come between them—and which, so inexplicable had the whole mystery appeared to him, he had never dared so much as to try to penetrate, lest he should wrong *her* in his thoughts.

"And *you* have forgiven *me*, Mary?" said Fairfax, all his pride forgotten.

"No. But can you forgive *me?*" she answered.

She had time to say this much only, before they were surrounded, and all was for a time welcome, and joy, and congratulation. Fairfax joined their party; Charley was joyously, almost boisterously, happy; little Fan full of gentle mirth; the admiral more than cordial.

"Could not Percy Fairfax—be hanged if he could help calling him Percy, since the day he saw him so smashed—could not Percy Fairfax ride home with them and dine in Grosvenor Street, as he had done at Merton Park, twenty times, without making a fuss about it?"

"Percy Fairfax would have been too happy; but—there always must be a *but*—he was on duty that evening; his chief had an official dinner, he really was very sorry."

And he really *was*. But, before they parted at

Grosvenor gate, he found a moment to whisper to Mary, "And may I come and see you, Mary?"

"Do you not know you may?"

"And when?"

"Whenever you please, Fairfax."

"This evening?"

"Please, *do*."

"And when I do come, you'll say—"

"Yes, sir—" with such an innocent, fond glance, and such a radiant smile.

"Mary—my own, own Mary Merton."

"You said so, once before."

"And meant it."

"So did I, when I said *I will*, and so—and so—I teased papa 'till he brought me to London."

"And you *will*, dearest?"

"I said it, once, but if 'you'd rather,' I'll say it again."

"I'd rather."

"Then, 'I will.'"

"Then I will come and see you this evening."

And so he did; but the American minister's dinner party did most assuredly, long and *slow* as it was—for it was a dainty spread given to those most unutterable of all snobs and hypocrites, Corncob. Splendid, and the rest of the League-men—seem to him longer and *slower* than ever one had seemed before. He would have been perfectly willing to swear that the soup was cold, though it was reeking from Soyer's most particular *marmite;* that the champagne was hissing hot, though it was *frappé au moment*, with the best ice of Wenham Lake. But slowest things, as well as fastest, must have their end.

And if the minister's dinner had been about the slowest thing of the season, the pace at which Percy Fairfax's cab went from Wilton Square to Lower Grosvenor Street, after it, was certainly quite the

fastest. "Miss Mary Merton was at home," said the tall footman, with a semi-conscious smile. "Would not Colonel Fairfax walk up stairs? Mr. and Mrs. Charles had gone to Vauxhall," he believed; "but the admiral would be back from the United Service in half an hour; he had been obliged to attend a ballot."

"How very opportune," thought unsuspicious and transparent Percy Fairfax, as he walked into the shadowy, half-lighted drawing-room, and found her alone, trying to cheat herself into the belief that she was reading something; very pale, very tremulous, with the trace of a tear or two on her cheek, yet lovelier than ever.

"And was that your reason, Mary?" he said, after he had thanked her for saying, "Yes, sir," and "I will," as he could not thank her in the Park, because she was on horseback, and there were so many persons near; "and was *that* your reason?"

"A silly, but a *woman's* reason."

"A beautiful, *because* a woman's reason. But why not give me a clue? that was—"

"Silly, Mary," she interrupted him, half smiles, half tears.

"Was it not?"

"You might have guessed it."

"Impossible. You *had* told me that your father had disinherited Charles, and threatened to make you his heiress; but that you would die sooner than rob him of his rights. Could you think *me* so base as to covet my friend's rights to my friend's loss?"

"No; O, I was a little fool.'"

"Why did you not speak out, dearest? why did you distrust me, Mary?"

"I did not distrust you; but I am a woman—and, and—I thought you might have *guessed;* and Percy —don't be angry, Percy, please. I *knew* you would let me do what I wished; but I was *afraid.*"

"Afraid of what, love?"

"That you might not be the noble soul I thought you."

"And so—"

"And so—" and she burst into tears as she spoke, "I tortured myself and you, and very nearly lost you, Percy—not that I did not love enough, but that I loved too much, and feared to disenchant myself with my ideal. But I'll never do so again, if you'll forgive me, Percy," and she laughed up in his face, well knowing that there was nothing to forgive, and that if there had been, she was forgiven long ago.

"I *ought* to have guessed," he said; "it is I that should ask to be forgiven; but henceforth, Mary dearest, that word must be unknown, between us two—

> 'One feeling in two bosoms,
> Two hearts that beat like one.'"

"Amen," said Mary; and she sank coy, but not reluctant, into his arms.

"And Amen," replied the old admiral, who returning quietly from his club, had entered the twilight room so noiselessly, that neither heard him coming, "and now let's go to supper, for, though this love-making is meat and drink to you young folks, we old boys can always do as well with an oyster and a glass of old Sercial, and not quite so well without them."

Happy Percy Fairfax! Happy Mary Merton! I don't know exactly what became of them afterward, but I never heard that either of them ever forgot the Virginian's debut at Melton Mowbray.

THE END.

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